

THE
Indulgent FATHER,
OR
Reclaimed Prodigal,
WITH
SIX SERMONS:

- I. On the VANITY of MAN.
- II. The CREDIBILITY of the RESURRECTION proved from Reason.
- III. The MUTUAL ADVANTAGES of SUBORDINATION.
- IV. The BENEFITS of CONTENTMENT.
- V. A DISSUASIVE from rash CENSURES.
- VI. An EXHORTATIVE to a speedy REPENTANCE, from the Danger of its DELAY.

By the Reverend Mr. RICHARD MASON,
Chaplain of His Majesty's Ship Maidstone.

*Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise
cast out. St. JOHN vi. 37.*

The Second EDITION:

Printed in the YEAR M,DCCXLV.

not for sale

Indulgent P A T H E R

Redeemed Prodigal

SIX SERMONS

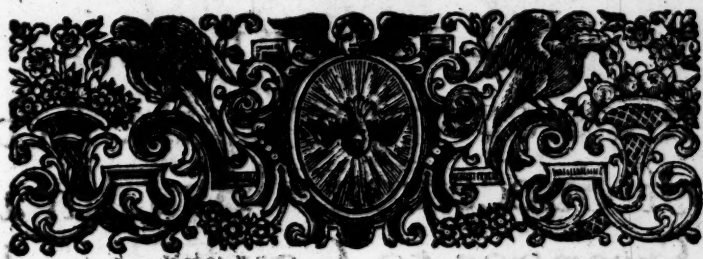
I. On the Value of Man
II. The Character of the
III. The Moral and
IV. The Power of
V. A Divine
VI. An Exhortation to
VII. A Warning from the Danger of
VIII. A Prayer



By the Reverend Mr. RICHARD MASON,
Curate of St. John's Church, St. John's.

That that church is now, I will be no more
and out of the hands of the

The Second EDITION
Printed in the Year 1753



TO THE
QUEEN.

MADAM,



S from my tender-
est Years, I have
been brought up
with the greatest Zeal for
your Royal House, and
a just Sense (as soon as I
was capable of Reason)
was instill'd into me of
the many invaluable Bless-
ings

vi DEDICATION,

sings we enjoy by the Act of Succession. As I am a Stranger to Courts, and but in a manner entering upon the Stage of Life, I flatter myself, from your Majesty's known Goodness, that You will pardon, nay more, graciously admit of this Address, from a Person whose Father has distinguished himself in his former Zeal for the Illustrious House of *Hanover*, and by his present Loyalty to his Majesty, your Royal Consort, and our dread Sovereign.

IN

DEDICATION. vii

IN the very earliest Account we have of Divine Worship, we find the First-fruits offer'd to God: May then your Majesty, who are (in the Absence of our King) Vicegerent of the Almighty, accept these the First-fruits of my Studies, which, with a Heart full of Loyalty, I lay at your Royal Feet.

I SHALL not attempt your Majesty's Character; Men need not be told the Glories of the Sun, nor the Benefits they receive

viii DEDICATION.

ceive from that refulgent
Orb.

MAY your Majesty long
continue to bless and im-
prove the World by your
Royal Example; and very
late receive the Reward
of those Virtues, which
make You the Delight
of his Majesty's Subjects.
I am,

MADAM,

Your Majesty's

Most Humble,

Most Obedient, and

Most Devoted Servant,

R. MASON.

A

L I S T

O F T H E

S U B S C R I B E R S N A M E S.

A

THE Hon. Sir Thomas Abney, *Knt. one of the Barons of His Majesty's Court of Exchequer*
Sir Robert Abdy, *Bart. Member for the County of Essex*
Sir Robert Austen, *Bart. Kent*
Mr John Austin
Joseph Windham Ashe, *Esq; Member for Downton*
Christopher Appleby, *Esq; Kew-Green*
Edward Acton, *Esq; of Acton-Scott. Salop*
John Acton, *Gent. of Bucknell, Salop*
Rev. Henry Archer, *D. D. Vicar of Faversham, Kent*
Rev. Mr John Arnald, *Rector of East-Langdon, Kent*
William Arnold, *Gent. Little Tothill-street, Westminster*
Mr Joseph Arnold, *Jermyn-street Westminster*
Mr John Adey
Mr John Audsley
Mr John Attlebourrough
Mr John Adams, *Spring-garden Passage*
Mr Henry Adams
Mr James Alderson

Mr John

2 *A List of the Subscribers Names.*

Mr John Allen, Palsworth-Court, Kent

Mr William Allen

Mrs Elizabeth Adderly, Pall-mall

B

Sir William Barker, Bart. of Ringsale-Hall, Suffolk

Sir John Barnard, Knt. and Alderman, Member for the City of London

Thomas Bramston, Esq; Member for the County of Essex.

Mrs Sufanna Bright } *of the Pentrey, Montgo-*
Mrs Mary Bright } *gomery-shire*
Charles Bright, Esq; }

Mr Foulks Bright, Bishops-Castle, Salop

Thomas Brown, Esq; of Mellington, Montgomery-Shire

Mr Thomas Brown, Bishops-gate-street, London

John Browne, Gent. Islington, Middlesex

Miss Mary Browne, Wellclose-square, London

Richard Baldwin, Esq; Ludlow, Salop

George Bennet, Esq;

Miss Eliz. Blaxland, Graveney-court, Kent

Mr Thomas Bigg, Surgeon, Lincolns-Inn Fields

Mrs Constance Sarah Barham, Mill-Bank

Edward Beckwith, Gent. Faversham, Kent

Robert Bradley, Gent. Grays Thorock, Essex

Thomas Bordley, Gent. Broad-street, London

James Bonwicke, Gent. King-street, London

Mr Richard Bridgman, Chipping Ongar, Essex

Rev. John Bott, A. M. Minister of Norton Mandevill, Essex

Mr William Bott

Richard Billingsley, Gent. } *Bishops-Castle, Salop*
Mr Richard Baxter }

Benjamin Baxter, Gent. New-Town, Montgomery-shire

Mrs Sarah

A List of the Subscribers Names. 3

Mrs Sarah Baxter, of Bromton, Salop
Rev. Mr William Bell
Rev. Mr John Beane
Rev. John Bateman, A. M. of University Colledge,
Oxon
Mr William Bradshaw, Soho-Square
Cornwall Bradshaw, Gent. } Ludlow Salop
Rev. John Bowdler, A.M. }
Mr Edward Barrow, Wanstead, Essex
Mr William Bull, Bishopsgate-street
Mr John Bafon, of Woodbeach, Salop
Rev. Mr Matthew Bradford
Mrs Katherine Bradford
Mr Joseph Babb
Mr John Birdseye, Kicksend, Middlesex
Mr Elias Brownsword, Budge-Row, London
Mr Edward Bowyer
Mr John Bromley, Piccadilly
Mr Thomas Butterfield, Watch-maker, Piccadilly

C

The Right Hon. the Lord Colerane
The Hon. Sir William Chapple, Knt. one of the Ju-
stices of His Majesty's Court of King's Bench
Sir William Corbet, Bart. Member for Ludlow
Rev. Mr. Downes Conron, of the great Island of Cork
Rev. Archibald Campbell, A.M. Chaplain to the Right
Hon. the Earl of Sutherland
Rev. John Colt, L.L.B. Rector of Lavenet, Cornwall
Rev. John Creyk, A. M. Rector of Foulness, Essex
Rev. Brian Cole, A.M. Rector of Ludlow, Salop
Rev. Joachim Cole, A.M. Minister of Edgton, Salop
Mr Mark Child, Chancery-Lane, London,
Miss Eliz. Crochley, Bloomsbury
Mr Samuel Clinton, Burnt-Mill, Essex
John Colley, Gent. Welch-Pool, Montgomery-shire
Richard Crackenthorp, Gent.

Mr John

4 *A List of the Subscribers Names.*

Mr John Clare, Surgeon, Faverfham, Kent
John Chriftie, *Gent.* } Twickenham
Mrs Elizabeth Chriftie }
Mr Thomas Chriftie, London-Bridge
James Chriftan, *Gent.* Oxon <
Vincent Cofta, *Gent.*
Mr Charles Curteis, Stratford, Effex
Mr Nathanael Crofley, Poultreys, London
Mr William Corick } Bifhops Caftle, Salop
Mr Richard Colbatch }
Mr John Colbatch
Mr Benjamin Crane
Mr Thomas Crowter, Greenwich
Rev. Mr Thomas Clarke, *Chaplain to the Right Hon.*
the Mafter of the Rolls
Mr William Clarke, Great Tower-ftreet
Mr William Clarke, Sittingbourn, Kent
Mr John Cox, of Ryton, Salop
Mr Jofep Callow
Mr Thomas Cummings
Mr Jonathan Chambers, Bucklersbury

D

William Dawtrey, *Esq*; Effex
 Robert Dunbar, *Esq*; Bethnal Green
 { *Mr* Robert Dunbar, *Merchant*
 { *Mrs* Sufanna Dunbar } Aldermanbury
 { *Mr* Sampfon Dunbar } London
 { *Mifs* Mary Dunbar }
Mr Henry Dawson
Rev. John Theophilus Difaguliers, *L.L.D. Chaplain*
to his Royal Highnefs the Prince of Wales
Rev. William Dyde, *A.M. Rector* of great Parndon;
 Effex
Rev. Mr John Ditton, *Lecturer* of Iflington, Middlefex
Mrs ————Dean, Bruton-ftreet
Mrs Hannah Dalton, Hyde-park, Corner
Mr Stephen Duck, Kew-Green
Mr Jofeph Dautry *Mr* Thomas

A List of the Subscribers Names. 5

Mr Thomas Drane
Mr Charles Dodd, Poultreys, London
Mr Charles Delaporte
Mr Isaac Doghead
Mr Isaac Doghead, jun. } *Dukes Place*
Mr William Daplyn, Raynham, Essex
Mr Thomas Drew, Bishops Castle, Salop
Mr John Davidson
Mr John Dorrell, Piccadilly, London
Arthur Davies, of Symonds-Inn, Gent.
Mr Thomas Dicey, Kensington
Dominick Donnelly, Gent.

E

Mrs Mary Edwards, Kensington
Thomas Edwards, Esq; } *of Pentrey-Hall, Montgo-*
Miss Penelope Edwards } *mery-shire*
Mr Peter Edwards
Mr John Edwards
Rev. Mr Robert Edwards, Curate of Great Salop
Rev. Thomas Edwardes, A. M. Vicar of Chirbury,
Salop
Giles Eyre, of the Inner-Temple, Esq;
Mr Edward Eyre, York-street, Covent-Garden
Rev. Mr William Evance, Rector of New-Town,
Montgomery-shire
Miss Fanny Egerton, of Trelydon, Montgomery-
shire
John Elwick, jun. Gent. Woodgreen, Hertfordshire
John Everel, Gent, Strand, London
Mr John Ely, New-Brentford

F

The Right Hon. William Fortescue, Esq; Master of
the Rolls, one of His Majesty's Privy Council
The Hon. Sir John Fortescue-Aland, Knt. one of the
Justices of His Majesty's Court of Common Pleas
Gauntlet

6 *A List of the Subscribers Names.*

Gauntlet Fry, *Esq*, Clifford-street, Burlington-Gardens

Anthony Fryer, *of the Middle Temple, Gent.*

William Firth, *of the Middle Temple, Gent.*

Mr William Frith } *of the Parish of Chigwell*
 Miss Elizabeth Frith } *Essex*

Mr James Fletcher, Bookseller, Oxon

Miss Dolly Freeman

Miss Nanny Freeman } Oxon

Miss Peggy Freeman }

Mr David Fordyce

Mrs Sarah Fawson

Mr John Fisher, Grays Thorock, Essex

Mr Richard Foxley

Mr Richard Fanner, New-Brentford

Mr William Fowler

G

Rev. Mr William Henry Giraud, *Vicar of Gravency, Kent*

Rev. John Giffard, *A.M. Rector of Mainstone, Salop*

Mrs Elizabeth Gordon, *St. James's Place*

Lewis Griffithes, *Gent.* } *of the Meadows, Mont-*
 William Griffithes, *Gent.* } *gomery*

Mr Thomas Griffithes, *of Colbatch, Salop*

George Green, *of Clements-Inn, Gent.*

Mr Henry Green

Mr John Gregory, *Piccadilly*

Mr James Gill, *Twickenham*

Mr James George

Mrs Elizabeth George } *Hedge-Lane*

Mr Philip Garland, *White-Cross-street, London*

Mr George Hodges, *Gold-smith*

H

The Right Hon. the Lord Hardwicke, Baron of Hardwicke, Lord High Chancellor of Great-Britain

The Right Hon. the Lord Viscount Hereford

The

A List of the Subscribers Names. 7

The Right Hon. the Lady Hereford
The Right Hon. the Countess of Hyndford
Sir Humphrey Howorth, Knt. Member of Parliament
for the County of Radnor
Henry Arthur Herbert, Esq; Member for Ludlow
Michael Harvey, Esq; Member for Milborn Port
Nicholas Harvy, Esq;
Joseph Huddart, of the Strand, Gent.
Thomas Harrisson, Gent. Fleet-street, London
Mr William Harrisson, Gravesend, Kent
Mr Richard Hardy, of Lincolns-Inn
Mr Thomas Home
Mr William Home } *Bishops Castle, Salop*
Rev. Mr. George Herbert, Rector of Bliburgh, Lin-
colnshire
Rev. John Hutchinson, A.M. Lecturer of St. Kathe-
rine Coleman, Fenchurch-street
Rev. Mr Robert Harding, Chirbury, Salop
Rev. Mr James Howel, HammerSmith
Mrs Elizabeth Heathcote
Mrs Elizabeth Henzell, Oxon
Mr Richard Hopkins, Chancery Lane
Mr John Hopkins
Mr William Howard
Mr Thomas Higginson
Mrs Ann Higginbotham
Mrs Christian Harring
Mr John Homer, Surgeon
Mr John Hayter, HammerSmith
Mr Robert House
Mr George Haworth
Rev. John Hutton, A M. Colledge-street, Westminster
Mr James Hutton, Bookfeller
Mrs Martha Hutton
Mr William Hilton } *Faversham, Kent*
Mr Robert Hilton }
Mr John Hawkins, Bookfeller, in St. Paul's Church
Yard *Mr George*

8 *A List of the Subscribers Names.*

Mr George Hawkins, Monmouth-street

Mrs Martha Hayward

Mr James Hassell, King-street, Westminster

Mr Thomas Hinch

I

Griffith Jenkins, Gent.

Rev. Mr Richard Jeffreys, Vicar of Baschurch, Salop.

Rev. William James, A.M. Vicar of Clyrow, Radnor-shire

Mr John Inman, Surgeon in the Royal Navy

Mr Joseph Jeffs, Stratford, Essex

Mr Daniel Johnston

Mr John Jackson, Red-Lyon Square, Holborn

Mr William Jourdain

Mr Humphrey Jones, Leadenhall-street

Mr Evan Jones

Mr John Jones, Broniarth, Montgomery-shire

Mr Thomas Jones } Bishops Castle, Salop

Mr Edward Jones }

K

John Kelly, of the Inner-Temple, Esq;

Mrs Mary Kelly

*William Kinaston, Esq; Member for the Town of Salop,
one of the Masters of the High Court of Chancery*

Miss Eliz. Kinaston

Miss Dolly Kinaston

Arthur Kinaston, Gent.

Abel Ketelbey, of the Middle-Temple, Esq; F.R.S.

Rev. Mr Arnold King, Lecturer of St. Stephen, Coleman-street, London

Mr Thomas Kirkman, Aldermanbury

Mr John Kiernan

Mr Stephen Kendrick

Mr John Knight

Mr Hugh Kennedy

Mr James Keatley

Mr. Alexander Kirkpatrick

Sir

A List of the Subscribers Names. 9

L

Sir Robert Long, Bart. Knight of the Shire for the County of Wilts

The Right Hon. Lady Emma Long, two Copies

John Lawson, jun. Esq;

Robert Lee, Gent. Spittal-Square, six Copies

Mr Anthony Lee, New Brentford

Edward Lloyd, Esq; of Aberbechan

Mrs Dorothea Lloyd, of Trelydon } *Montgomery-*

Rev. Mr Edw. Lloyd, Minister of } *shire*
Fornden

William Lloyd, Gent. } *of Montgomery*
Miss Margaret Lloyd }

Miss Mary Lear, } *Holborn*

Miss Elizabeth Lear. }

Mr Solomon Lowe, Hammersmith

Mr Edward Littleton, Bookseller, Fleet-street

Richard Llewellyn, Gent. of the Broadway, Montgomery-shire

Mr Thomas Llewellyn

Mr John Lay, Raynham, Essex

Mr Samuel Line, of the Strand, London

Mr Peter Lucas, Pantion-street

M

Mrs Alice Mason, of Rockley, Salop

Mr John Mason, Holborn, London

Mr Richard Mason

Robert Mathison, Esq; Privy-Garden

William Mostyn, Esq; of Bryngwyn, Montgomery-shire

William Morris, of the Middle Temple, Esq;

Thomas Morris, Gent. } *of Pentrenant, Montgomery-*

George Morris, Gent. } *shire*

Rev. Mr Charles Morgan, of Jesus Colledge, Oxon

Rev. Mr William Morgan, Vicar of Matherne, Monmouth-shire

B

Rev.

10 *A List of the Subscribers Names.*

Rev. Mr Morgan Miles
Robert Morley, Esq;
Mr Septimus Mattison
Mr George March, Faversham, Kent
Mr Robert Mayhew
Mr Gilbert Morewood
Mr Robert Morle, Stratford, Essex
Mrs Esther Monk
Mr George Murfin

N

Her Grace the Dutches of Newcastle
Rev. William Noble, A.M. Rector of Nittiswell, Essex
Rev. Page Newborough, A.M. Rector of Onibury,
Salop
Mr William Naylor, Piccadilly
Mr David Nisbett
Mr William Napton
Mr Thomas Newman, Holborn, London
Mr Richard Newman, Faversham, Kent
Mrs Elizabeth Nickcolas
Mrs Mary Nickcolas
Mr Thomas Nickcolas
Mr John Nickcolas
Mr William Newell
Mrs Mary Newell } *Welch Pool*

O

The Right Hon. the Earl of Orford
The Right Hon. Arthur Onslow, Esq; one of his Ma-
jesty's most honourable Privy-Council, Knight of the
Shire for the County of Surry, and Speaker of the
honourable House of Commons
The Honourable Richard Onslow, Esq; Brigadier Gen-
eral, Member for Guilford
Richard Oakeley, Esq, of Oakeley, Salop

A List of the Subscribers Names. II

Rev. Herbert Oakeley, A.M. Vicar of Lydbury, Chaplain to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales

Rev. Mr Joseph Orme, Minister of Clunbury, Salop

P

The Right Hon. Lady Katherine Pelham

The Hon. Richard Philipps, Esq; Major General

Mrs Ann Phillips

Mr Joseph Philips

Rev. John Pelling, D. D. Rector of St. Ann's, Westminster

Henry Pawson, Esq;

George Penbury, Gent. of Wotherton, Salop

Mrs Grace Pugh, 2 Copies } Bishops Castle, Salop

Mr William Price

Mrs Mary Price, Hanger-Lodge, Northamptonshire

Edward Pryce, Esq; of Gunley, Montgomeryshire

Mr John Pryce, Brockton, Salop

Mr Edward Pryce, of Knighton, Radnorshire

Adam Pryce, Gent.

John Peers, Gent.

Rev. Mr John Parry

Mr Henry Parry, Tanner

Francis Peters, of the Inner-Temple, Gent

Mr Edward Pittaway, Oxon

William Pearce, Gent. of Heighthley, Salop

Stephen Popham, Gent. Air-street, Piccadilly

Thomas Powlett, of Clements-Inn, Gent.

Mr Thomas Palmer

Mr Peter Parquot, Jeweller, King-street, St. Anns Westminster

Rev. William Plees, A.M. Rector of Hern-Hill, Kent

Rev. Mr Thomas Pretymann

Rev. Mr Thomas Prichard, Rector of Snead, Montgomeryshire

Rev;

12 *A List of the Subscribers Names.*

Rev. William Perfect, *A.M.*

Rev. Mr Henry Perfect

Mr Henry Petty, Norfolk-street, in the Strand

Mr Henry Page

Mr James Powell, Knighton, Radnor-shire

Mr William Paine, Woolwich, Kent

Mrs Sarah Ann Paine, Chatham, Kent

Mr William Pearson

R

The Right Hon. Robert Robinson, *Esq;* Lord Chief
Justice of Gibraltar, six Books

George Robinson, *Esq;* } of Brithdir Mont-

George Robinson, *jun. Gent* } gomery-shire

Rev. Mr Thomas Robinson, *Rector* of Norton, Kent

Mrs Emma Robinson

Rev. Edward Rogers, *A. M. Rector* of Mind Town,
Salop

Rev. Mr Richard Reynolds, of Hufflington, Mont-
gomery-shire

Mr Lewis Reynolds

Rev. Mr John Roberts, *Minister* of Llanvechen, Mont-
gomery-shire

John Roberts, *Gent.* Pall-Mall

George Rous, of Doctors-Commons, *Gent.*

Mr Stephen Rose, Faversham, Kent

Mr John Radcliffe, Fleet-street, London

Mr Thomas Richards

Mr John Rider

Mr John Ridges, Little Carter-lane, London

S

Sir John Strange, *Knt.* his Majesty's Solicitor General
Edmund Sawyer, *Esq;* one of the Masters of the High
Court of Chancery

Robert Sherwood, *Esq;* Mayor of Faversham

Miss Eliza. Sherwood

Samuel Shepherd, *Esq;* } Faversham, Kent

John Savage, *Esq;*

William

A List of the Subscribers Names. 13

William Stane, *Esq;* } Forest-hall, Essex
 Richard Stane, *Esq;* }
 George Smyth, *Esq;* North-Nybly, Gloucester-shire
 Trafford Smyth, *Esq;* Molesey, Surry
 Edward Smith, of Furnivals-Inn, *Gent.*
 Mr Roger Smith, Little-Parndon, Essex
 John Stone, of the Middle Temple, *Esq;*
 Edward Stone, *Gent.* Whitecross-street, London
 Simon Stanton, of Clements-Inn, *Gent.*
 Samuel Sharp, *Gent.*
 Mr Alexander Sz-setsey
 Mr William Spencer, Bridewell Hospital
 Mr Richard Scrimshire, Bucklersbury
 Rev. Mr Samuel Sneade, Curate of Church Stock
 Rev. Thomas Stackhouse, A. M. Vicar of Beenham,
 Berkshire
 Mr Jonathan Scull, New-Palace-Yard, Westminster
 Mr George Stagg, Bedford-Court, Covent Garden
 Mr Thomas Sanders, Marybone-street, in the Parish
 of St. James's
 Mr Joseph Shaw
 Mr Thomas Swaine, Southwark
 Mr Thomas Southen, Greenwich
 Mr Thomas Sell, Kent

T

The Right Hon. the Lord Talbot
 The Right Hon. the Earl Tilney
 The Right Hon. the Lady Tilney
 Samuel Tuffnell, *Esq;* Member for Marlow
 Rev. David Turner, A. M. Faversham, Kent
 Rev. Mr John Turner, Leominster, Hereford-shire
 Rev. Thomas Turner, A. M. Rector of Bonnington,
 Kent
 Miss Margaret Trauntar, Church-Stock
 Rev. Mr Christopher Thomas
 Richard Thomas, jun. *Gent.*, Woodbeach, Salop
 John Thomas *Gent.* Bishops-Castle, Salop
 Mr Robert Trott, Clerkenwell
 Mr John Tempest, Covent-Garden Mr Michael

14 *A List of the Subscribers Names.*

Mr Michael Taylcure, Wine-Merchant, Mark-lane,
London

Francis Thompson, *Gent.* Vine-street, Piccadilly

Mr Francis Taylor, of Dukes Place

Mr Charles Thredder, King-street, London

Mr William Tyson, Hammersmith

Mr Noble Tobby, Essex-street, in the Strand

V

Rev. John Vade, *A.M. Vicar of East Ham, Essex*

Rev. William Vaughan, *A.M. Vicar of Guilsfield,
Montgomery-shire*

Mrs Elizabeth Vincent, Kew Green

Mr Frederick Vincent

Mrs Mary Vincent

Miss Mary Vincent

Mr John Vincent

W

The Right Hon. Sir John Willes, *Knt. Lord Chief
Justice of His Majesty's Court of Common-Pleas*

The Right Hon. Horatio Walpole, *Esq;* one of His
Majesty's Privy-Council, *Member for the City of
Norwich*

The Hon. Martin Wright, *Esq;* one of His Majesty's
Justices of the Court of King's-Bench

Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, *Bart. Knight of the Shire
for the County of Denbigh*

Gabriel Wynne, *Esq;* of Dolearddyn, Montgomery-
shire

Sir Charles Wager, *Knt.* Member for Westlow

John Walcot, *Esq;* } of Walcot, Salop

Mrs Emma Walcot }

Humphrey Walcot, *jun. Esq;* of Bitterley, Salop

George Walcot, *Esq;* } of Ludlow, Salop

Mrs Walcot }

Mrs Elizabeth Walcot }

Miss Ann Willis, Upper Grosvenor-street

Robert

A List of the Subscribers Names. 15

Robert Waring, *Esq;* of Owlbury, Salop
Captain Edmund Waring, Bishops-Castle, Salop
John Wainwright, *Gent.* Hatton-Garden
Mrs Ann Wallar }
Mrs Hester Wood } Faversham, Kent
Rev. Mr John Walker, Schoolmaster of Grays Thoro-
rock, Essex

Mr Thomas Walker, Brewer, Leather-lane
Mr Thomas Walker, North-Fleet, Kent
Thomas Warren, *Gent.* Paddington, Middlesex
George Ward, of Furnival's-Inn, *Gent.*

Wakelin Welch, *Gent.* }
Mrs Elizabeth Welch } Stratford, Essex

Mr John Woodland, Watchmaker
Mr Edward Williams, Princes-street, Piccadilly
Edward Wilcox, *Gent.* Kerry, Montgomery-shire

Mr Henry Whittingham }
Mr Edward Weaver } of Montgomery

Mr Richard Weaver

Mr Henry Webb

Mrs Mary Webb

Mr Samuel Webber

Mr William Woodcock

Mr Charles Wale, Piccadilly

Mr Francis White, Jermyn-street, Westminster

Mr Thomas Wagg, Bruton-street

Mr Thomas Warford

Rev. Mr James Wheeler

Mr John Webster, New Brentford

Mr John Watters, Knighton, Radnor-shire

Mr Charles Watters, Bishops-Castle, Salop

Mr Thomas Watters, great Carter-lane, London

Mrs Jane Watters, Church-Stock

Mr Edward Welton

Mr Thomas Walton

Z

Mrs Elizabeth Zouche, Long-Acre

The Names of the SUBSCRIBERS since the former LIST.

HIS Grace Peregrine (Bertie) Duke of Ancaſter
His Grace Charles (Fitz-Roy) Duke of Grafton,
Lord Chamberlain of the King's Houſhold
His Grace John (Ruffel) Duke of Bedford, Firſt Lord
Commiſſioner of the Admiralty
Her Grace the Dutcheſs of Bedford
Her Grace the Dutcheſs (Dowager) of Manchester
The Right Hon. the Earl of Grantham
The Right Hon. the (late) Earl of Uxbridge
The Right Hon. the Lord Viſcount Gage, Member for
Tewkeſbury
The Right Hon. Charles, (Colvert) Lord Baltimore,
Knt. of the Shire for the County of Surry, and one of
the Lords Commiſſioners of the Admiralty
The Right Hon. the Counteſs of Huntingdon
The Right Hon. Lady Lincoln
The Right Hon. Lady Betty Germain
The Right Hon. Lady Talbot
The Right Hon. Lady Maria Walpole
The Hon. (Cecilia) Lady Garrard of Eaſt-Ham, Eſſex
His Grace Thomas (Herring) Lord Arch-biſhop of York
The Right Rev. Benjamin (Hoadley) Lord Biſhop of
Wincheſter
The Right Rev. Edmund (Gibſon) Lord Biſhop of
London
The Right Rev. John (Thomas) Lord Biſhop of Lincoln
The Right Rev. Joſeph (Wilcox) Lord Biſhop of Ro-
cheſter
The Right Rev. Robert (Butts) Lord Biſhop of Ely
The Right Rev. Iſaac (Maddocks) Lord Biſhop of Wor-
ceſter
The Right Rev. Thomas (Gooch) Lord Biſhop of Nor-
wich

The

18 *A List of the Subscribers Names.*

The Right Rev. Edward (Willes) Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells

The Right Rev. Richard (Trevor) Lord Bishop of St. David's

The Right Rev. Matthew (Hutton) Lord Bishop of Bangor

Sir William Hewet, Bart. Commander of His Majesty's Ship Princess Louisa

Sir Kendrick Clayton, Bart. Member for Bletchingly, Surry

Sir Henry Vincent, Bart.

Rev. Sir Gilbert Williams, Bart. Vicar of Islington

The Hon. Sir Thomas Parker, Knt. Lord chief Baron of His Majesty's Court of Exchequer

Sir Simon Umlin, Knt. Serjeant at Law and Recorder of the City of London

The Right Hon. Henry Pelham, Esq; Knight of the Shire for the County of Suffex, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and one of His Majesty's most Hon. Privy Council

The Right Hon. Thomas Winnington, Esq; Member for and Recorder of the City of Worcester, one of His Majesty's most Hon. Privy Council and Pay-Master General of all His Majesty's Forces

The Hon. James Oglethorp, Esq; Brigadier General of His Majesty's Armies, General and Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Forces in South Carolina and Georgia, and Colonel of one of His Majesty's Regiments of Foot, one of the Honourable Trustees for establishing the Colony of Georgia in America, and Member for Haslemere in Surry

Robert Colebrooke, Esq; Member for Malden

Edmund Waller, Esq; Member for High Wycomb, and Cofferer of His Majesty's Household

John Blagrove, Esq; Member for Reading

Thomas Pryse, Esq; Member for the Town of Cardigan

*John Plumptre, Esq; } Members for the Town of
Borlace Warren, Esq; } Nottingham*

James

ALIST of the Subscribers Names. 19

James Patterson, Esq; of the Parish of Plumsted, Kent.
William Hayward, Esq; Serjeant at Law
Francis Roche, of Lincoln's-Inn, Esq;
John Spooner, of Lincoln's-Inn, Esq; } *Counsel*
Tho. Caldecott, of the Middle-Temple, Esq; } *Law*
Ernie Bertie, of the Middle-Temple, Esq;
John Marsh, Esq; Netherfole, Kent
Matthew Wymondfold, Esq; Wanstead, Essex
Christopher Milborne, Esq;
Isaac Helbut, Esq;
Frederick Rogers, Esq; Commander of His Majesty's
Ship Maidstone
Savage Mostyn, Esq; Commander of His Majesty's Ship
Hampton-Court
John Drew, Esq;
Richard Sutton, Esq;
Richard Mead, M.D. F.R.S.
Rev. John Wilcox, D. D. Master of Clare-Hall,
Cambridge
Rev. Nicolas Carter, D. D. Rector of Sutton, Kent,
Rev. William Berriman, D.D. Rector of St. Andrew
Underhaft, and Fellow of Eaton College
Rev. John Middleton, D. D. late Rector of St. Peters
Cornhil, London
Rev. William Webster, D. D. Vicar of Ware.
Rev. Stephen Hales, D. D. Minister of Teddington
Rev. William Nicolls, D. D. Vicar of St. Giles's Crip-
legate
Rev. Ralph Skerret, D.D. Rector of Greenwich, Kent
Rev. Leonard Howard, D. D. Chaplain to His Royal
Highbness the Prince of Wales
Rev. William Simpson, D. D. Rector of St. George
Middlesex
Rev. William Simpson, A. M.
Rev. Nicolas Tindal, A. M. Chaplain of Greenwich
Hospital
Rev. Robert Beachcroft, A. M.
Rev. Thomas Juson, A.M. Rector of Wanstead, Essex
Rev

20 *A List of the Subscribers Names.*

Rev. Joseph Henshaw, A. M. Rector of High Ongar

Rev. James Harwood, A. M. Chaplain to the Right

Rev. the Lord Bishop of Rochester

Rev. Richard Ward, A. M. Chaplain to His Majesty's Household

Rev. William Reading, A. M. Librarian of Sion College, London

Rev. John Withers, A. M.

Rev. Mr. Thomas Delafay

Rev. Mr John Wigmore, Chaplain to the Ordinary of Chatham

Rev. Robert Carr, A. M.

Rev. Mr. Peter Walkden, of Barking, Essex

Rev. Lewis Hughes, A. M.

Rev. James Guthrie, A. M.

Rev. Mr. Gilbert Burnet, Minister of Clerkenwell

Rev. Thomas Birch, A. M. F. R. S.

Rev. William Cox, A. M. Lecturer of Kensington

Rev. Mr. William Pinckney, minor Canon of St. Paul's

Rev. Thomas Negus, A. M. Rector of St. Mary Rotherhith

Rev. Alexander Cunningham, A. M. Walthamstow

Rev. Thomas Yarnton, A. M. of University College, Oxon

Rev. John Lloyd, A. M. Lecturer of St. George, Middlesex

Rev. Richard Jones, A. M. Chaplain of His Majesty's Ship Portland

Rev. Roger Shackleton, A. M. of University College, Oxon

Mr John Shackleton

Mrs Mary Ann Shackleton

Mrs Hester Montravers

Mr John Montravers

Mr Culmer Montravers

Miss Kitty Montravers

Miss Ann Roberts

Miss Eliza Roberts

Berkely-Street, Bic-

cadilly

Deal, Kent

Miss

A List of the Subscribers Names. 21

Miss Eliza Ware, Kensington
Mr William Tayleure, of Thavies-Inn, Attorney at Law
Mr John Donnelly, of the Middle-Temple, Attorney at Law
Mr Robert Ford
Mr William Ford, Carpenter in His Majesty's Navy
Mr Samuel Berkley
Mr Francis Dalby
Mr Robert Cheek
Mr Edward Payne
Mr John Jarvis Davison
Mr Alexander Davison
Mrs Jane Gascoigne
Mr James Troubee
Mrs Elizabeth Troubee
Mr Charles Enfield
Mr John Licieux
Mr John Brindley, Six Copies
Mr Henry Ord
Mr George Wilson
Mr Forster Bainbridge
Mr William Beard
Mr John Vilett
Mr John Johnson, Story's-Gate, Coffee-House
Mrs Hellin Shridder, Charles-street Westminster
Mr Thomas Ayres, Rochester, Kent
Mr John Wall, St. James's-market
Mr Rene Baudowin
Mr John Davis, Windsor
Mr John Davies, Chigwell, Essex
Mr George Cure
Mr John Doughty
Mr Vincent Cunningham
Mr Whitby Atkinson
Mr John Fox
Mr John Akers
Mr George Akers

} Apothecaries

} Cheapside

} Attorneys at Law

} Gravesend

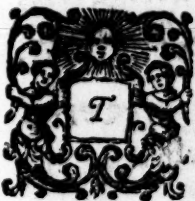
Mr

22 *A List of the Subscribers Names.*

Mr John Willson, Kent
 Mr John Thomas
 Mr Robert Anderson, Portugal-Street
 Mr Richard Jackson, Tavistock-Street
 Mr Bartholomew Bludwick
 Mr Bignall Potter
 Mr William Coumbe
 Mr Jonathan Daniells
 Mrs Elizabeth March } Tower-Hill
 Mr Thomas Page }
 Mrs Sarah Lugg }
 Mrs Martha Wilkinson } Church-Row, Aldgate
 Mrs Alice Whatley }
 Mr George Moody, Sword-Cutler to *His Majesty*
 Mr William Trehearn, Southwark
 Mr John Stanley, Organist of *St. Andrews, Holborn*
 Mr Belcher Mercer
 Mr Thomas Shelmerdine
 Mr Richard Thackeray
 Mr Thomas Watson
 Mrs Mary Watson
 Mrs Martha Watson
 Mrs Elizabeth Watson
 Mrs Tryphena Eden
 Mr James Tidmarsh
 Mr Paul Ferris
 Mr Henry Deas
 Mr Lawrence Raymond
 Mr Stephen Blakeley
 Mr John Saxton
 Mr John Penn
 Mr William Purchase
 Miss Susanna Sladden
 Mrs Hannah Bromfield
 Mr Philip Lermite
 Mr James Guthrie, Surgeon in the *Royal Navy*



THE
PREFACE.

 *HE Mercies of God are an inexhaustible Subject for Meditation; which cannot employ our Thoughts without affecting our Hearts; we cannot but equally wonder at the forbearing Patience of our God, and the ungrateful Stupidity of our own Actions, by which we daily offend him; nay, to such an Height of Presumption are we now grown, that we dare, in some measure, call upon him, whose Ways are inscrutable,*

a table,

x P R E F A C E.

table, to account to our Reason; and we refuse both Faith and Obedience, if we are not convinced, as in a Mathematical Demonstration, of the Reasonableness of his Injunctions. This Presumption occasions the violent Attacks that we see daily made upon the Christian Religion, which was miraculously propagated, and, notwithstanding the severest Persecutions, spread itself over the Face of the Earth, and has triumph'd these seventeen Centuries over all the Wit, the Malice, and the Power of its Opposers. This is sufficient to convince a thinking Man of its being from God; but more especially when he farther considers, that this Religion, for which such Numbers have shed their Blood, is not calculated to gratify, but to curb

P R E F A C E. xi

curb our Passions, and teaches us, that we are not to hope for Happiness on this Side of the Grave, but rather to expect Persecutions, and such Inconveniencies, as Mankind naturally abhors and flies; For if in this Life only we have Hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable, 1 Cor. xv. 19.

To argue with the Deist from divine Writ, would be useless, since we argue from a Principle he denies; Reason is the Standard he will try every thing by; he tells you he can believe nothing which he cannot comprehend by Reason; yet, let him but alone a while, and he will acknowledge a great many Things, which are much beyond the Extent of his Reason, as Eternity,

Infinite Space, Infinite Divisibility of Matter, &c. He believes he exists to some End; but he must be beholden to Religion to know for what End. Why does he believe some Things implicitly, and why expect the Conviction of his Reason, before he will give Faith to others? Does not this proceed from Arrogance, or an Unwillingness to assent to what will lay him under a Restraint?

I have often heard some of these Gentlemen say, that the Christian Religion was derogating from the Honour of a Supreme Being, and that it was an Absurdity to imagine God, immensely Great, can be either pleased or displeased with the Actions of such inconsiderable Creatures

P R E F A C E. xiii

tures as we are, and at the same time acknowledge his Ways not only inscrutable, but that it is impious to endeavour at prying into the Reasons of his Providence, or, which is the same thing, his eternal Decrees. Is not this an Absurdity? If his Ways are past finding out, and it is criminal to search into them, by what Methods have these Gentlemen discovered that God has no Regard to his Creatures, or that the allowing Three Persons and One God is derogatory from his Honour, when our Adoration is paid to him with an humble Acknowledgment of our not comprehending what he has been pleased to put beyond the Reach of our finite Understanding? But,

Upon

xiv P R E F A C E.

Upon these Gentlemens own Maxims, must not a resign'd and humble Acquiescence be preferable to an Enquiry, which they own is not only presumptuous, but infructuous, especially since their sole Guide, Reason, will tell them, that he who runs the least Danger, and pursues that Course, which may possibly (I say, but possibly) gain him the greatest Advantage, is the most rational Man.

Let us then suppose that there is a Possibility of the Christian being the true Religion; that the Rewards promised, and the Punishments threaten'd by it, may (possibly) be other than human Invention; and let the Deist answer me, which pursues the most reasonable Course,
 he,

P R E F A C E. xv

he, or the Christian; especially when we consider, that he has no Hopes of an hereafter, as God is above regarding our Actions, and consequently will neither punish nor reward them? In such case, let us suppose that, by embracing revealed Religion, he is in an Error, he can suffer nothing in a future Life, and possibly may find an happy Eternity. But,

Why do these Gentlemen profess moral Virtues; why do they abstain from Rapine, Murder, &c.? because they should break the Bands of civil Society, and introduce Anarchy. Very well: But why don't they, when they have an Opportunity to gratify their Passions, or raise their Fortunes, without such dread-

xvi P R E F A C E.

dreadful Consequences, lay hold on the Occasion? because they fear the Laws, and beside value their Characters. But suppose they can do these Things without Danger of Discovery? 'Tis all one, not for the World, they would not have it upon their Consciences, they would not bear the Uneasiness of an inward Reproach. What is this Conscience which restrains them, when, by laying hold of an offered Opportunity, they might live in State and Affluence? It is an innate Light, by which we distinguish what is good and just, from what is the reverse. How came we by this innate Light? It is implanted by God. Did God ever do any thing in vain? No. Of what Use then is this implanted Light? To guide our Actions. Why
should

P R E F A C E. xvii

Should we have any Regard to our Actions? 'Tis already answered, to avoid Confusion, which must necessarily be introduced, if once the Band of Society is broke. And what is this to God, who does not mind our Actions? Why, nothing at all. Then God, of whom you have so high an Idea, has, we find, implanted this Light to no Purpose, contrary to your own Maxim, that He does nothing in vain. You are afraid to derogate from Divine Majesty, and yet you do it in a most flagrant Manner, making him inconsistent, by taking Care to give us a Guide of our Actions, when at the same time they are indifferent to him.

b

But

But I have heard some Deists avoid this necessary Consequence, by frankly owning that Conscience was nothing but a Prejudice of Education, which was not easily got over; yet profess they would not, on any Account, do what we Christians call an unjust Action, tho' neither Shame nor Punishment was to attend it. I wonder how these Gentlemen are to be characterized; I should think that Man very weak, who, thoroughly persuaded that he was to render no Account of his Actions hereafter, would let slip any Opportunity of gratifying his reigning Passion, supposing he could do it with such Secrecy, that neither Shame nor Punishment could attend it; and indeed, I should be very loth to intrust my Fortune with a Man that thinks,

P R E F A C E. xix

thinks, if he can avoid Shame and Punishment in this, has nothing to apprehend from another Life.

The Notion of a future Retribution, if it is an human Invention, is of very ancient Date; the Heathens, long before the Incarnation, had their Elysium for the Good, and their Hell for the Wicked: This is so well known to every Schoolboy, that I shall say no more of it.

I have observ'd before, that the Deists pretend to have a much higher Idea of God than we have, and 'tis the Fear of affronting his Divine Majesty, which is the grand Obstacle to their acknowledging Reveal'd Religion: But do not they them-
b 2
selves

selfes spoil this great and ineffable Being of all Beings of two Attributes, by denying his having any Regard for the Actions of Men, I mean, of his Justice, and of his Mercy? For by their Position, they leave him no room to exercise the one, or to shew the other.

But let us examine the Tempers and Actions of Mankind; let us look into the Course of the World; and then let us, by the Deist's Standard, Reason, conclude which is the most agreeable to it, the Notion of a future Retribution, or that of God being altogether indifferent as to the Actions of Men. Can we reasonably believe that the Cruel, the Avaricious, the Humane and Charitable, meet, after Death, the same Fate,

Fate, if I may be allow'd the Term; and that there is no Difference between the Man who suffers with Patience, Want, and Contempt, for the sake of a good Conscience, and him who, to gratify his Ambition or Covetousness, lays Countries waste, or ruins private Families? Nay, have we not, in the different Tempers of Men, Heaven and Hell lively expressed? (according to the Notion we have of them) In some we see a Calmness, a Beneficence, a Sweetness in their Composition, which captivates our Love, while others, by the Harshness of their Temper, their Selfishness, Inhumanity, Envy, Malice, and Barbarity which they exercise on Brutes, and would, durst they, wreck on Men, draw on themselves an universal Hatred.

xxii P R E F A C E.

Hatred. Yet, if there is no future Life, these are upon the same Level; the constant Practice of Virtue, the subduing our Passions on the one hand, avail us nothing; and on the other, if we can avoid the Laws of Man, a licentious Life, Rapine, and Murder will pass with Impunity: Is this Doctrine consonant with Reason? Do we not, in the Course of Life, often see the most Profligate, the most Voluptuous, nay, the most Stupid, enjoy all that their Hearts can wish, while virtuous and knowing Men, who are shining Lights, are struggling with every Inconveniency of Life? Can we see this, and at the same time acknowledge the Omniscience, the Justice and Goodness of God, yet disbelieve his having any Regard
to

P R E F A C E. xxiii

to the Actions of Men, and deny future Retribution, which must be the Consequence of this Indifference of the Deity, with regard to us? I think this is a Conviction of a future State; of Rewards and Punishments.

*The Deist will tell you, that we ought to worship the Deity *: But to what End should we do this, if we are guided by Reason? It cannot be to obtain his Protection in this Life, for we are below his Regard; and to enjoy an happy Futurity, or to deprecate future Misery, can be no Reason for a Deist's Adoration, since he believes neither. If he answers, That his*

* Christianity as old as the Creation.

xxiv P R E F A C E.

Worship proceeds from his Gratitude, and that he pays God the Tribute of his Thanks and Praise, as he is the Author of his Life, and of all the Good he receives, he denies his Position of the Deity being regardless of our Actions; or acts contrary to the Dictates of his Guide, Reason, by doing what is to no Purpose; for his most fervent Prayers, most humble and grateful Adoration, are useless, if our Actions are below the Notice of, and are indifferent to God.

*I am certain these Gentlemen, who boast so much the Light of Reason, and at the same time are propagating, with great Industry, Doctrines which clash with it, whatever their Profession is, can
be*

P R E F A C E. xxv

be no Friends to their Country, which they take a direct Method to embroil by civil Commotions; for if once they can destroy the Notion of a future State, if they can prevail on Men to throw off all Religion, the surest Prop of Government, they will find their moral Virtues too weak a Band to restrain them, when fully persuaded that there is no After-account, within the Bounds of their Duty; to prevail on them to rest easy in a galling Subordination, or to abstain from perpetrating any Villany, which they think may tend to the putting an End to their Wants. When we have once thrown off all Hopes and Fears of Futurity, we shall easily find Arguments to palliate the most flagitious Crimes; and what must, or can be the Consequence

xxvi P R E F A C E.

quence, but Rebellion and Confu-
 sion? The wanting Man will cry,
 “ Was I placed on Earth to starve,
 “ or is it not owing to my own
 “ Pusillanimity? God, who does
 “ not regard our Actions, cannot,
 “ for that Reason, have enjoined
 “ me to live in this Penury and
 “ Submission to the Great and Rich,
 “ who have, by Power or Policy,
 “ usurp’d upon my Birthright; I
 “ have by Nature an equal Claim
 “ to the Earth I inhabit, the Air
 “ I breathe, and the Water I drink;
 “ which I only enjoy, because the
 “ Rich and Powerful cannot de-
 “ prive me of their Use; or, no
 “ doubt, they would also make me
 “ pay for these Elements, as they
 “ do for that which they have par-
 “ celled out among themselves, by
 “ suc-

P R E F A C E. xxvii

“ *successive Encroachments of their*
 “ *Generations upon those of the*
 “ *Poor? Are they more Men than*
 “ *we are; and is not our Subor-*
 “ *dination, and their superior Rank,*
 “ *owing to our own mean Submis-*
 “ *sion?*” Is any Reflection more
 natural with necessitous Men; and
 can we believe, that if once they
 come to this way of thinking, they
 will proceed no farther? Overturn
 Religion, and Property is no more.
 The Bold and Daring will stop at
 nothing: What should restrain him
 from taking the Wife of another, if
 she pleases his Eye, and he knows
 himself strong enough to do it; or
 from murdering the Husband, who
 should endeavour to defend her? In
 a word, the Doctrine of these Gen-
 tlemen, if once imbib'd by a Majo-
 c 2 rity,

xxviii P R E F A C E.

rity, must necessarily introduce the wildest Disorder; wherefore it becomes the Policy of our Superiors, to endeavour at suppressing the publick Attempts they make from the Press (possibly from latent Designs) to gain Profelytes, especially since too many of those on whom it is incumbent by their Profession to refute false and pernicious Tenets, seem so very indolent in the Discharge of their Duty, and so many ready to embrace any Doctrine, which will suffer their giving a Loose to their Passions, especially among the gay Young, nay, gay Old and Thoughtless, are already so tinctured, that they boast their Impiety, and make the purest Religion, the Religion which their Sovereign has sworn to maintain, the Subject of their Contempt

P R E F A C E. xxix

tempt and Laughter. I said it became the Policy of our Superiors to put a Stop to this Licentiousness; had I said the Safety of the Government in a great measure depends upon it, I don't think I should have gone too far; for what Oaths can bind Men, who can persuade themselves Perjury is no Crime? And he cannot think it so, who believes that the Actions of Men are indifferent to God, and who has consequently laid us under no Injunctions. But,

Lest I should be thought too prolix, or draw upon me the Censure of Self-sufficiency, I shall pursue this Subject no farther. As to the following Sheets, I must leave them to the Judgment of the Publick: It
cannot

xxx P R E F A C E.

cannot be expected, that I should say any thing in the Commendation of my own Work; and it would be making the Publick but an ill Compliment, and shew an affected Modesty, to depreciate what I have ventured to publish; if I did not think they would bear reading, I ought not to have sent them to the Press.

I shall only say, that however this Piece is receiv'd, the Pleasure afforded me in the contemplating the Divine Mercy, is a full Compensation for the Pains this Tract cost me in the writing.

The Hymn which I have sub-joined, may not improperly be called a Cento; it is little more than a
Com-

P R E F A C E. xxxi

Compilation : I have made free both with inspired and prophane Writers, by throwing together some Part of their Thoughts, which were adapted to my Subject, the Praise of the Almighty. I hope this will not be an Objection ; for whoever considers the Almighty is the Theme, he will own, that if all Mankind joined their natural and improved Talents to set forth his Praise, yet must the Production fall immensely short of the Subject.



T H E

P R E F A C E

Compilation. I have made the labors
and revised and corrected the
my reviewing together some time of
that I have had much more detailed
to my subject, the State of the
affairs. I have this with me
an edition, for which I have
the change is the same, the will
now that of the President, and
from a natural and improved
to his former his time, yet with the
revolution will naturally part of
the subject.

g



g



T H E

Indulgent Father.



OUR Saviour, Jesus Christ, seems, chiefly, to endeavour at the making Men sensible, that they ought, at all times, of whatever Crimes they may have been guilty, to have Recourse to God, with a full Confidence in his Mercy: Wherefore the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, being scandaliz'd at that Tenderness with which he treated Sinners, he justifies his Lenity by the Parable of the Prodigal Son; a Parable, which however plain and simple

2 *The Indulgent Father.*

ple it may appear, furnishes us with such a Fund of Reflections, that we cannot meditate upon it, without being truly sensible of its Force.

LUKE XV. Ver. 11, 12.

*A certain Man had two Sons:
And the younger of them said
to his Father, &c.*

IT is the younger Son who is here mentioned, and who withdraws from his Father's House; as it is, most commonly, the youngest, who are oftneft guilty of Errors. In Youth Reason is weak, and our Passions strong; we are, by the Dint of our Ignorance, vain of our Knowledge; the Opinion we have of our own Judgment, makes the Advice of wiser and older Men irksome, and, as we think, impertinent; we have an Abhorrence to all Restraint, and we look upon a Father as a troublesome Censor, an Enemy to our Liberty, who being himself past relishing Pleasure, envies us
the

The Indulgent Father. 3

the Enjoyment of what he can no longer pursue: It is to this, to their Passions being damp'd by Age, that we attribute the Contempt which the Wise and Aged have for the Phantoms we are so fond of, and not to the genuine Reason, viz. their having discovered the Vanity of them. *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*, says the wisest of Mortals; but we are clearer sighted, flatter ourselves we shall find it otherwise, and prove more successful in our Pursuit.

IT is from such Principles that an unnatural Son forgets God his Father; forgets him, from the very Instant he begins to have a sufficient Strength of Reason to know him; at the very Time that the Endeavours of a paternal Providence are most earnest and solicitous; when the heavenly Father would take Advantage of an Age most susceptible of Good or Evil: It is then that the Almighty employs every Moment for our Salvation, that he steps in, and, before the wicked World has made any deep Impression, omits nothing to possess a

4 *The Indulgent Father.*

Soul amiable thro' its Innocence : Daily he excites, supports, raises, intimidates, mollifies it by his divine Grace, and watches over it with the tender and vigilant Eyes of a compassionate Father. But alas ! our inveterate Enemy, the World, is assiduous ; it flatters our Passions ; we listen to the Syren's Song, and we grow in Love with Destruction. Three Enemies unite their Forces against the Frailty of our Nature ; the Devil tempts, the Flesh attacks, and the World by Example authorizes. " Am I singular in following the Dictates of Nature ; or rather, " Am I not particular in endeavouring to " silence those Passions, which certainly " cannot be criminal, as they are natural ; it is questioning the Goodness of " God, to imagine that he would make " them inseparable to my Nature, to be " a daily Temptation in my Way, superior to the Strength he has given me " of resisting ? " Youth and Wisdom are incompatible, Example is prevalent, we are artful in deceiving ourselves, and pleased with any specious Arguments, which flatter our Inclinations ; we make
but

The Indulgent Father. 5

but faint Efforts, and suffer ourselves to be carried away with the Torrent.

Father, give me the Portion of Goods that falleth to me. V. 12.

ARE not here the Extravagance of the Son, and the Condescension of the Father, equally surprizing! What Folly in the Son! What an Affront to the Father! Without the least Cause for Dislike, he will leave an indulgent Parent: How can he palliate this Demand, and not accuse himself of Indiscretion? He cannot complain of his Father; but he is weary of a regular and orderly Life, he is impatient to be Master of himself, to live after his own Humour, and no doubt but he depended upon his own Prudence making a conspicuous Figure: He either did not believe the Dangers to which Youth is exposed, as great as experienced Age had represented them, or thought himself able to surmount them.

THIS is exactly the Case of most Men:
The Portion given to Man by God, is
Free-

6 *The Indulgent Father.*

Free-will and Reason; while these are under the Direction of the Almighty, all goes well, and he is governed by the Law and Faith: but Man beginning to think this Dependence irksome, is for throwing off the Yoke, and being his own Governor. God, says he, has given me Free-will, and Reason to guide it; wherefore I will act without Controul; and thus divests himself of both the Law and Faith. Can a greater Contempt be shewn, or can there be a more flagrant Revolt? However, the Condescension of our heavenly and tender Father is so great, that he will use no Restraint; either that a constrain'd Service is displeasing to him, that he has some Regard to the Free-will of Man, and will leave him the Merit of his Return; or, that he foresees the Sinner will one Day be oblig'd to acknowledge (as convinc'd of) the Nothingness of those Things, on which he has set his Heart. God notwithstanding does not desist from doing what is necessary to restrain him; but he will break loose.

And

The Indulgent Father. 7

*And not many Days after, he
took his Journey into a far
Country. Ver. 13.*

THIS Step, one would think, should be a very great Shock to the Son; he leaves an affectionate, indulgent Father, whose Tears express his Apprehensions and Tendernefs, who already bewails him as a lost Child; and sorrows over him, as taking the last Embrace; who presses him to his Bosom, blesses him, and with interrupting Sighs sobs out a sad Adieu from an over-charged Heart. — At any other time this moving Grief of his fond Parent would have been insupportable to him; but his irregular Passions harden his Heart; his Mind is taken up with the near Prospect of (alas!) imaginary Pleasures; these blind him to the Tears of his foreboding Parent; these stop his Ears to his Sighs; these make him suffer, with Impatience, the tender Transports of his affectionate Grief; these, in a word, banish Nature, and make him insensible

8 *The Indulgent Father.*

to every thing, but what may contribute to the gratifying of his Passions.

Thus is the Sinner led away by the Object of his Desires, which makes him deaf to the Admonitions of his Reason, and fly from the Call of Grace. Were the Mask taken off; could he recover the Use of his Eyes, and see what a Nothing he pursues, what a real Good he foregoes; could he be made sensible of the Tenderness of his heavenly Father, who would turn him from the Paths of Death, and wooes him to Happiness, he would be astonished and confounded at his own Stupidity.

THE Prodigal goes far distant from his Father, that his Sight may be no Check upon his Riots; that he may have a full and uninterrupted Swing, and give an intire Loose to his Passions, which he is resolv'd to gratify. In like manner, the Sinner industriously avoids every thing, that may recal God to his Mind; he gets as far from, and thinks as little of him, as possible; he no longer frequents
his

The Indulgent Father. 9

his House ; he neglects his private as well as publick Worship, and shuns those whose Regularity may reproach his Folly, and awaken in him that Sense of his Duty which he is endeavouring to get the better of, that he may not be disquieted in his Pursuits, or have his Pleasures embitter'd with the Stings and Remorse of Conscience.

WE may reasonably imagine the Prodigal, while he had wherewithal to carry on his Debauchery, never thought of his anxious Father ; or if he did, that it was only to reflect upon his Austerity, and to ridicule his Frugality : This, this is the Consequence of Libertinism. How many Men pass whole Years in a continued Course of Sin, without once thinking upon their Creator, or ever making Mention of his Name, if not to profane it ; or to turn into Ridicule, what is most sacred, and thus fill up the Measure of their Iniquity, and cut off all Hopes of a Return !

10 *The Indulgent Father.*

*And there wasted his Substance
with riotous Living. Ver. 13.*

No Consequence can be more natural; Debauchery is the Mother of Want, as it is an inexhaustible Source of Demands sufficient to drain the fairest Patrimonies: How often is the Care and Labour of a Parent's whole Life lavish'd away in a very small Time by a riotous Son? and how frequently do we see Fathers toiling Night and Day, denying themselves necessary Rest; nay, some, necessary Food and Raiment, to leave an extravagant Son, as many Years of bitter Reflection for momentary Pleasures; which, however, he thought cheaply purchased with his whole Fortune! Could the Departed see what passes here on Earth, and were still subject to Passions, what an inexpressible Grief would such a Parent be sensible of?

If then our Lord, in the Parable of Talents, seems to intimate that he felt a
Plea-

The Indulgent Father. 11

Pleasure in the Improvement made by the diligent Servant, can we imagine that he sees with Unconcern that Grace neglected, nay contemptuously rejected, which was the Purchase of his most precious Blood.

How engaging is the Behaviour of the Father in this Parable! He sees his Son's Ingratitude, by his Desire of leaving him, without abating any thing of his Tenderneſs; he does not let drop a paſſionate Expreſſion; we hear of no Reproaches, nor does he puniſh his obſtinate Folly, by cutting him off from that Part of his Eſtate which he requeſted, and by rewarding the filial Duty of the prudent elder Son at the Expence of the thoughtleſs Prodigal; nay, when he had receiv'd his Portion, as his Father foreſaw the Conſequence, he cheriſhed Hopes of his returning to his Duty, and of being ſenſible of his paternal Tenderneſs, when he ſhould diſcover the Emptineſs of his darling Pleaſures, and when the Effects of his Riot ſhould make him capable of

12 *The Indulgent Father.*

Reflection, which could not but be attended with Repentance.

How justly, O Almighty Being of Beings! how justly art thou here figured to us? how patiently dost thou wait, how tenderly dost thou wooe our Return, when we have stray'd from the Paths of Righteousness and Life? The Tenderneſs of the Father diſarms the affronted Majesty of the God, and ſtops the Bolt which our Crimes have merited. Thou knoweſt our Frailties, O God, and compaſſionateſt our Weakneſs; thou haſt form'd us of Earth, and it is no Wonder if we have a Propenſity to what is earthly, and that the Soul thus clogg'd, finds it difficult to riſe aloft, and contemplate what is ſpiritual: It is true, thou couldſt have refin'd this Clay, thou couldſt have made us too ſtrong for Temptation; but then, where had been our Merit, where thy paternal Pity! Free-will had not been allow'd us, and we had been no more than Machines, acting from an exterior Impulſe, and nothing could have been im-

The Indulgent Father. 13

imputed to us : But thou hast set Good and Evil before us ; thou hast given us Reason to determine our Choice, and art ever present to strengthen our Endeavours, to support us against Temptation ; if we chuse the Ways of Life, thou art at hand to guide us, and we have the Reward of our Choice : In a word, Thou art the tender Father, who not only pardonest our deviating, but restorest us to the Dignity of Children, when we return, acknowledge, and repent our Follies.

*And when he had spent all, there
arose a mighty Famine in that
Land, and he began to want,
Ver. 14.*

HERE the unhappy Fugitive begins to be acquainted with what was unknown to him in his Father's House, and of which he, ignorantly, went in Search. While his Money lasted, Pleasure drew a Veil over Want ; Riot and Debauchery would admit of no Reflections upon the
Con-

14 *The Indulgent Father.*

Consequence of his Course of Life, and he insensibly became a Prey to Penury, before he had ever heard it mention'd.

THUS, whoever departs from God in the vain Search of Happiness, will find themselves deceiv'd, and that they really quit its Source, to seek it where it is not to be found; for it is in God alone, and He alone is the Fountain of all Bliss. Such an one, will, like the Prodigal, be brought to a Sight of his Folly by his Misery, which ever waits upon Sin and Stupidity.

It is certain, the World wears an alluring Mask, and makes us flattering Promises; but then all is but Wind and Vapour; we find nothing real, and I am satisfied, that no One has ever yet experienced the uninterrupted Fruition of what he has most ardently wish'd, answer the Ideas of Pleasure, with which he had amused himself: — Beside, how soon are we cloy'd? how immediately does that become irksome, which we have

The Indulgent Father. 15

have hazarded our Salvation to purchase?

INDEED, true and perfect Happiness is not to be expected on this Side the Grave ; and what is known of it here, is only by those who are conscious of having perform'd their Duty, and acted up to the Dignity of the Image of the Almighty stamp'd upon their Souls.

BUT the Vicious, who tells you he pursues his Happiness, is intirely a Stranger to the Object of his Pursuit ; how many bitter Reflections break in upon him ; how many Disappointments, how many Dangers, accompany him, dash with Gall, and take off the promised Sweetness ! And how often does this vain Pursuit hasten us to the Grave, and make us Martyrs, or by living in the Contempt of the World, Examples of Debauchery, as suffered to drag a wretched Life to be a Warning to others ! Infirmary and Want are the Consequences of head-strong Folly.

And

16 *The Indulgent Father.*

*And he went and joined himself
to a Citizen of that Country;
and he sent him into his Fields
to feed Swine. Ver. 15.*

WHAT a cruel Fall! from Luxury, from being flatter'd and caress'd, to Want and Servitude! nay, to the most vile Employment of a Slave, to the attending upon the most filthy of Animals! How can this Employ be relish'd by one, who could not suffer the Injunctions of a tender Father, nor be easy till he had withdrawn himself from his Authority! How different are the Commands of a Parent and a Master! The former consults the Child's Good, his Advantage, and what may tend to his Profit only. The latter has no other View, than that of his own Interest, which makes him Cruel and Despotick.

HERE we have a Sinner shadowed out to us, who thinks the Restrictions of the Law

The Indulgent Father. 17

Law an intolerable Severity ; he is uneasy under the Restraint ; he cannot submit to such cruel Conditions ; God imposes upon him, what it is impossible for Flesh and Blood to comply with ; he will therefore break off this Yoke, and, as the Prodigal thought, enjoy his Liberty ; but, like him, becomes a Slave, and feeds Swine, that is, indulges his Passions : But he is not a Slave to one Master only, as the Prodigal is said to have been, but to as many inordinate Desires as torment him, and to such Persons as these shall again subject him. If his predominant Passion is Impurity, how obsequiously does he submit to the imperious Commands of a haughty Woman, who knows her own Power, and his Weakness ? Nay, he is moreover subject to the Confidants, and a Slave to the Fears of being discover'd by a jealous Husband, or a revengeful Brother. How miserable is that Woman, whose Passion has stain'd her Honour, and who is become a Slave to her Servants, whose Smiles she must court and purchase, whose Insolence she must bear with, and

D

whose

18 *The Indulgent Father.*

whose Secrecy she apprehends! What Independence has such an one gain'd by a boasted Liberty? If Ambition engrosses the Man, at how dear a Rate does he purchase Power and Titles? What mean, what base Submissions does he make to, perhaps, the Persons he hates and despises? How does he watch the Looks of his Patron, study to be useful to him, or to be serviceable to his Pleasures; what Incense does he not offer; what Slights, what Affronts is he not seemingly blind to, and returns with a submissive Cringe? He makes his Court to every thing about the Man in Power; his Servants, nay, the meanest of them, he will caress, (tho' himself nobly born) talk familiarly with them, treat them as his Equals, and even play the Sycophant to them: Nay, he will flatter his Beasts, and be the humble Servant of a Monkey, or a Spaniel. If the Love of Money engrosses him, how cruel does he become even to himself; how unjust to others? Avarice is the Antithesis to Justice: He is a Slave to the tormenting Passion of accumulating, and
this

The Indulgent Father. 19

this Curse makes him the Curse even of his Children ; he is despis'd by all who know him ; as he values no one, so he is valued by none ; and as his avaricious Temper makes him prey upon all the World, so all the World endeavours to prey upon him : little Scruple is made of cheating him ; and if he complains, his Misfortunes are the Diversion of those from whom he expects Pity. But the Curses and Hatred which attend his Covetousness, are not all ; he loses one of the greatest Pleasures of Life, which never fails of being rewarded with those which are eternal ; I mean, the inexpressible Satisfaction the Humane and Charitable are sensible of in having reliev'd the Neccessitous. Could the covetous Man be sensible of the inward Joy found in Actions of Mercy, he would employ his Store in the purchasing a Pleasure, which exceeds every other this World can afford us, even were it not attended by any Reward hereafter. Unhappy Wretches ! who make a God of Money ; for whom do ye punish yourselves ? Who

20 *The Indulgent Father.*

will reap the Advantage of your denying your selves common Necessaries, and of your defrauding the Poor? For, remember, ye are no more than Stewards, whom the Almighty will call to severe Account. For whom do you pawn your Souls? Can you say who will inherit the Hoards you gather, and for which you pay, and will pay so very dearly? If they descend to a Son, how long may they continue in his Family? may he not be as lavish as you are miserable? may he not be cheated and beggared by unjust Guardians? Is it not probable, from daily Experience, that all you have been so anxious for, may be soon dissipated? *Malè parta, malè dilabuntur.* But let us suppose you have a Succession of prudent Men, will their Ease in this World compensate your Pains in the next? Reflections however are vain; Reason has no Weight; where Avarice has once taken deep Root in the Heart, and without a special Grace, there are no Hopes that the covetous Man can ever be brought to have Compassion on himself; Gold quiets his Conscience; Gold covers

The Indulgent Father. 21

covers Contempt ; Gold makes him fast, and bear the Inclemencies of the Weather with Patience ; Gold makes him deaf to Admonition, insensible of his Danger, and suffer what, if imposed upon him, he would think an intolerable Punishment.

THUS, O Benign God ! hast thou mixt Bitterness with all our fancy'd Pleasures, that we may be convinc'd there is no Happiness, no real Peace, no solid Content, to be found, but in Thee alone : Thou, alone, art the Fulness of Joy ; with Thee are Treasures inexhaustible, such as we can never be depriv'd of, which are subject to no Injuries of Time, and such as will never cloy ; with Thee is everlasting and unallay'd Pleasure.

And when he came to himself, he said, &c. Ver. 17.

THE Prodigal, considering what he had despised, and the Condition his Folly had brought him into, begins to ruminate

22 *The Indulgent Father.*

nate on the Difference between the plentiful Table of a Father, where the Servants paid him due Respect, and were always ready to obey him, and the miserable Pittance of a Slave, who must be subject to the imperious Commands of an haughty Master.

REFLECTION, we may say, is the Microscope of Reason, which clearly discovers to us what is Good, and Eligible; what Evil, and Detestable; and is consequently the first Motive to Repentance. When we have call'd to mind the inward Peace, the Calm, which is the Fruit of our Innocence and Obedience, the Mildness of what is imposed upon us, for our own Good, and compare it with the Remorse of Conscience, which is inseparable to the Wicked; the many Inconveniencies and Dangers to which our Passions expose us; the constant Guard we are oblig'd to have upon our Words and Actions, to prevent the sharp-sighted World coming to the Knowledge of what it is for our Interest and Character to keep

The Indulgent Father. 23

keep conceal'd; the daily Anxieties and Troubles, the Pains and Sickneſs which attend an unjuſt or an irregular Life; when, I ſay, we come once to reflect on the vaſt Difference, it muſt awaken our Reaſon, and Reaſon will never fail of guiding us into the Paths of Repentance. When our Miſeries have ſtirred us up to Reflection, and that has introduc'd this Ray of the Divinity, it enlightens our Minds, ſhews the Baſeneſs of our Slavery, the Meaneſs of our Submiſſion to ſuch Bondage, makes us ſenſible of the Vanity of our promiſed Reward of Pleaſure and Happineſs, and raiſes a Bluſh when we think on our Weakneſs in ſuffering ourſelves to be impos'd upon by our Paſſions ſo far, as to have given up the Subſtance to graſp at the Shadow: it rouzes in us a noble and generous Contempt of our former Meaneſs, we are aſham'd of the frivolous Amuſements we had once purſu'd with ſuch Eagerneſs, we have a Diſtaſte for all Irregularity, and we naturally ask ourſelves if we were brought into the World to live the ſenſual Life of Beaſts,
and

24 *The Indulgent Father.*

and whether there can be either God or Heaven for him who thinks of neither.

*How many hired Servants of my
Father's have Bread enough,
and to spare, and I perish
with Hunger?*

As I have said, the Misery of the Prodigal awakening his Reflections, he compares his present Circumstances with those of, even, his Father's Servants :
“ How far happier are my Father's Do-
“ mesticks than I, who am his Son, for
“ whom he ever shew'd a paternal Fond-
“ ness ! they have what is sufficient, nay,
“ more than sufficient, to satisfy Nature,
“ while I am here perishing with Want ! ”
Thus, how natural is it with the Sinner to reflect how much happier are they, to whom God has given inferior Talents, and to whom he has deny'd the Necessaries of Life, if not gained by their Labour ; for such, having Confidence in Him, sleep secure and sound, have no Disquiet of Mind, trust to his Mercy for

a

The Indulgent Father. 25

a Provision in this Life, and depend on it to reward their Probity in the next: how much happier, I say, than I, to whom he has given a large Share of Sense, and on whom he has, with a liberal Hand, bestow'd every Thing I could wish; but who, by making an ill Use of these Blessings, and instead of improving them to my Salvation, have turn'd them into Curses, and made them the Instruments of my Perdition! What Anguish do I feel; what Terrors haunt me! how can I see that indulgent God, and not stand self-condemn'd? What can I alledge; what Excuse can I offer? how do I dread the making up my Accounts before that just, yet severe Master? This must be; a Day of Reckoning will come on; there is no Subterfuge; no Evasion will be of use to me before the all-seeing Judge: But he is merciful; he wills not the Death of a Sinner; his Arms are open to the Penitent: I will therefore begin this Moment he allows me, to fly to that Mercy, as the Sanctuary to skreen me from his Justice; and with the Prodigal,

E

I

26 *The Indulgent Father.*

I will arise, and go to my Father. Ver. 18.

A Gleam of Hope, which breaks in upon his just Fears ; the Reflection upon the infinite Mercy and Tenderness of his God, compleats the Repentance of the late dissolute Sinner ; he calls to mind his patient Forbearance ; he considers, on the one hand, the Power, the unbounded Power, of the offended Deity ; and on the other, the Offences he had been guilty of, in Defiance of his Omnipotence ; and from hence, he is encourag'd to put his Trust in his Compassion, and to have some Confidence, that he has spar'd him hitherto, that he might have Opportunity to return to his Duty, and experience his Clemency. In that Father, whom he has alone offended ; in Him, the Prodigal alone places all his Hopes ; those false Friends, who had borne a Share in his Debaucheries, who had made an Advantage of his irregular Course

The Indulgent Father. 27

Course of Life, are not mention'd; he will not address himself to such Men, who often condemn the Actions which they have themselves encourag'd, and put us upon, and ever change their Temper and Behaviour with an Alteration of Fortune. We may suppose he had, before he was reduc'd to so great Misery, been convinc'd of their Inhumanity and Falsehood: No, He will go to his Father, he has often experienced his Goodness, and reasonably concludes, that his Submission will efface his Rebellion. "Among Nominal Friends I despair of Succour, my Misery will make them pride themselves in their own prudent Oeconomy, and I must expect nothing from them but shocking Comparisons, cruel Reflections, and bitter Reproaches: My Father, the very Name speaks Comfort, has a Fund of Compassion, which my obstinate Folly has not drain'd; Nature, with him, will plead in my Behalf, and he will think my Sufferings a sufficient Punishment for my Fault." Thus, tho' the Almighty

28 *The Indulgent Father.*

threatens our Sins with eternal Fire, yet is he much more ready to obliterate our Crimes, than to punish them; and, if I may be allow'd the Expression, fears more our falling under the Rod of his Justice, than we are apprehensive for ourselves.

*And will say unto him, Father,
I have sinned against Heaven,
and before thee. Ver. 18.*

“ B U T what can so profligate a Son
“ say to his Father after a continued
“ Course of Debauchery! I will say all
“ that the most mortify'd Wretch can
“ imagine, all that the most sincere and
“ penetrating Grief can suggest. If my
“ Faults have laid Nature asleep, I will
“ endeavour to awaken it by recalling to
“ his Mind, that he is my Father, tho'
“ I have justly forfeited the Title of a
“ Son, and reminding him of that pater-
“ nal Goodness which I have so vilely
“ abus'd, I will fall at his Feet; embrace
“ his Knees; not endeavour at extenu-
“ ating

The Indulgent Father. 29

“ating my Crime, but make an inge-
“nuous Confession of my Guilt: I will
“neither alledge the Violence of my
“Passions, the Inconsiderateness of Youth,
“the Frailty of Man in general, the Ef-
“fect of ill Company, nor Force of Ex-
“ample: No, I am sensible that I am
“inexcusable, that I have sinned with
“my Eyes open, that my Father fore-
“saw and foretold my Misery, which I
“am now too sensible of, and frivolous
“Excuses would but aggravate my Crime,
“by thinking I can impose upon his good
“Sense, or that I can owe my Pardon to
“any thing but his Compassion. I have
“sinned, and it is alone from a frank Ac-
“knowledgment that I can hope his Pity,
“and prevent his Reproaches, which
“however severe, can never equal those
“my own Conscience.” It is thus the
Contrite humbles himself before his God,
he acknowledges his Sins, and hopes for
Mercy; and who can despair, that, sin-
cerely repenting, flies to infinite Com-
passion?

30 *The Indulgent Father.*

*I have sinned against Heaven,
and before thee. Ver. 18.*

I HAVE, says the Prodigal, sinned against Heaven, which has enjoined me to pay You a filial Duty; and in this, I have particularly sinned against You, the best of Fathers, from whom I have received so many Marks of Concern and Tenderneſs; whoſe Fondneſs rear'd me, and whoſe Care protected and provided for me, till I was of an Age to ſhew my Ingratitude, and, in Return for your Indulgence, throw off all Duty and Reſpect: Yet, yet did you continue to look upon me with an Eye of Pity; yet had you a Fund of Compaſſion to pour out upon this wilful, this ſelf-ſufficient Wretch: How warmly did you adviſe my laying aſide the Thoughts which my Folly had ſuggeſted! how earneſtly did you preſs my Stay! how wiſely, how truly did you foreſee and repreſent to me the Miſeries, which my head-ſtrong Paſſions were hurrying me into! and how tenderly, at my
ſet-

The Indulgent Father. 31

setting out, did you lament me as a lost Child! Surely that Wisdom, which could so well tell me the Consequences of my Obstinaey, could not but foresee my Repentance; and that Father, which bewailed the Calamities I was running into, cannot but have some Commiseration for me, now, that they have made me an Object of the greatest Compassion, and an Example of the most sincere Penitence! That Patience, which oppos'd Reason alone to irregular and fond Desires, which did not reproach my want of Gratitude, certainly is sufficient to expect my Return: but, alas! the Foundation, the Ground of my Hope, is also that of my Confusion; the more tender he is, the greater is my Guilt, and his Excess of Clemency casts upon me, ungrateful Wretch! an indelible Stain. Alas, my God, how exactly is this my Case! What black Ingratitude have I not been guilty of in Return to numberless Mercies! how often hast thou, by thy Grace, laid before me the End of those Ways which I fondly chose, and which I am

now

32 *The Indulgent Father.*

now sensible lead to endless Misery ! how deaf have I been to all thy Calls ! how have I wilfully shut my Eyes, and run into the Paths of Destruction, and with what Patience hast thou borne with my obstinate Rebellion ! All I could do could not provoke thee to destroy. I acknowledge, O my God, with sincere Contrition and Confusion of Face, I acknowledge that I have sinned against thee, and stand self-condemned ; I have no Plea, no Excuse, no extenuating Allegation ; I throw myself entirely upon thy Mercy ; if thou rejectest me, I am miserable indeed ! Yet must I own thy Justice ; but the Experience of thy Long-suffering gives me still Assurance I shall find Mercy. *I have sinned*, but it is alone, my God, against thee, which leaves me still Hopes of Pardon ; had it been against an earthly Prince, a Man, subject to human Frailties, with him, I might reasonably despair, not only for myself, but for my innocent Family ; and my Treason would entail Want and Infamy on my hapless Posterity. How amazing is it, O my God !
that

The Indulgent Father. 33

that Man can see thee daily affronted, see thy Laws trampled under Foot, and does not even set a Mark of Infamy on the Rebel to eternal Majesty; yet, at the same time, stigmatizes a Generation, as long as it shall continue, deprives it of Honour and Estate for taking Arms against thy Vicegerent! But most Princes are less anxious for thy Glory, than their own Interest! such as, perhaps, without Emotion, may hear thy Power most stupidly transferred to Atoms, will not suffer their own to be call'd in question.

I have sinned: Whom have I offended? that tremendous BEING, whose *Fiat* as it made, so can it annihilate the Universe, and before whom I must singly and personally appear, to give an Account of every Word and Action. What Stupidity! what Temerity!

I have sinned; I have, by so doing, grieved that tender Father, who has not only given me Life, but the Necessaries to support it, and has protected me against

F

the

34 *The Indulgent Father.*

the numberless Accidents which I have seen cut short the Lives of others by a sudden Death, that has not allow'd Time for Penitence.

I have sinned against that God, who tenderly courts me to Happiness, whose Mercies are as unlimited as his Power, and whose Compassion is more ready to pardon, than we are to repent. What Ingratitude! what Cruelty to myself!

I have sinned, and I acknowledge, O my God, that I deserve Punishment; thou canst inflict it, but on whom? On a Son, who throws himself into the Arms of thy Mercy; on a Criminal, who seeks his Asyle in the Compassion of his Judge; on an Immortal Soul created, eternally, to love and adore thee! The Mercies I have already experienced must be infinite, as thou art infinite; for thou art Mercy itself, as thou art alone Wisdom: That Compassion, which has so often stopp'd the severe Hand of Justice, and which, notwithstanding my numberless
Of-

The Indulgent Father. 35

Offences, has still continued to me the paternal Tendernefs of a Father, and has averted thine Eyes from my Obftinacy and Rebellion; that COMPASSION encourages me to hope, thou wilt not throw me off, but that thy Arms are ftill extended to receive the repenting PRODIGAL. How wretched would be my Situation, had I not fo tender a Father to have Recourfe to! A FATHER, who, inftead of being irritated by my Revolt, grieved for my FOLLY, purfu'd me flying from, with the Means of obtaining, Mercy, and who, the more obftinate I was in my Ruin, endeavour'd the more to prevent it! *Thou willeft not the Death of a Sinner.--- To the Lord our God belong Mercies and Forgivenefs, though we have rebelled againft him: neither have we obeyed the Voice of the Lord our God to walk in his Laws, which he hath fet before us.*

I HAVE SINNED; and all the Pleafures, all the Pomp, Dignity and Riches of this World, cannot wash out or atone for the foul Stain of Ingratitude; they

36 *The Indulgent Father.*

are thy Mercies, O Lord, which alone can cleanse me. But suffer thou my Recantation to avail; I have offended thee, but it was in the Transports of my Passions; the Violence of my Desires, the sudden Impulse of my Rashness, have taken Advantage by my Weakness; in the Commission of my Sin, Reason was not consulted: but my Repentance is the pure Result of my Reason. I rashly offended, but maturely and deliberately implore thy Mercy: Sin triumph'd over the brutal Part; the rational devotes itself to Thee. Whatever I have done to displease thee, was opposite to the real Sentiments of my Heart, which my Passions never left me Leisure to consult; hurried away by them, I had not Time for Reflection; blinded by the Allurements of the World, I saw not whom I offended, and was deceived by vain Idea's: but it is by the Light of Reason and Revelation, which cannot impose, that I detest my Crimes; and 'tis from the Sincerity of that Detestation, and the humble Acknowledgment of my Faults, that I presume

The Indulgent Father. 37

sume to beg thou wilt still be a Father,
cancel my Rebellion, and receive the
convinced Penitent.

*And am no more worthy to be
called thy Son; make me as
one of thy hired Servants.*

Ver. 19.

HERE is a Transition, from the Horror of Sin, to a Contempt of himself; than which, nothing can be more natural: Whoever forms a true Idea of God, cannot be blind to his own Nothingness. Want of contemplating that infinitely glorious BEING of BEINGS, is the Reason we are so vain of ourselves, so puffed up with our own ridiculous Imaginations. What is this little, arrogant, strutting, short-liv'd Animal, *MAN*? a swollen Bubble of a Moment's Duration! Did not the last Generation make way for us? and must we not quit the World to give place to the succeeding? What is his Power? Can he change the Colour of an

Hair?

38 *The Indulgent Father.*

Hair? Can he retain the Beauty and Strength of his Youth? Will the Tides cease to flow, or the Winds grow calm at his Command? Will the *Terror of his Countenance* awe the *Rage of a starving Lyon*? or will an hungry Shark respect, and abstain from devouring this Lord of the Creation, *on whom so many Creatures prey*? What are his Riches? Weighty Dirt, and sparkling Stones! What his Pomp and Finery? The Spoils of the Earth, of Beasts, Birds, Worms, and even the Excrements of Creatures! What are his natural Endowments, in which he prides himself? Has he more than one, which he often prostitutes to his Senses! I mean Reason; and is he not, in all others, below the brute Creation? Has he the Strength of the Elephant, the Beauty of the Horse, or the Sagacity of the Hound? As to his Time allotted, how far does the Hart, the Eagle, and even the Raven, exceed him in Length of Years? Nay, in the Gratification of his Appetites, however pungent they may be, he is more im-

tent

The Indulgent Father. 39

tent than Beasts. In his Luxury the Worm goes beyond him ; Man feeds on Brutes ; Worms on Man ; and a Course of royal or noble Carrion, serv'd up to the Worm, is more expensive in the Dressing, as it must be embalm'd with the most costly Spices ; and requires more Pomp to be usher'd in, as it must be attended with Drums, Trumpets, Heralds, Banners, and a sweeping Train of idle Pageantry, than is bestow'd on the Entertainment of the greatest Monarch. Where is the conquering *Alexander*, of whom *Juvenal* said,

*Unus Pellæo Juveni non sufficit Orbis ;
Æstuat, infelix, angusto limite Mundi !*

Where is the luxurious *Sardanapalus* ? where the wealthy *Cræsus*, and the wise *Solon* ? Where are all the Heroes, the Sages, and the MONSTERS of Antiquity ? Are they not Dust, the Sport of Winds, the Beds of Reptiles ? Are they not trampled under the basest Feet, nay, even dung'd upon by the most contemptible Creatures ? But,

WHY

40 *The Indulgent Father.*

W H Y has the wise Creator suffered Man to be excell'd in some Gifts of Nature by the brute Creation? but that he might make use of Reason, the most valuable, though, if neglected, the most dangerous of all Gifts; and being humbled by the Knowledge of himself, turn his Eyes to, and fix his Dependence on, the sole Source of all Perfection; adore his Majesty, and endeavour, by the Purity of his Life, to be united to that only Good, that only Happiness, and despise transient and imperfect Pleasures, for those which give Fulness of Joy to all Eternity. How inconsiderate are we! We dance upon a Precipice, and are wilfully blind to the Danger; like the Prodigal, who was all Gaiety, all Mirth and Joy, while severest Want was gradually, yet visibly, coming upon him: but he shut his Eyes, he would not see a displeasing Object, no melancholy Thought should disturb his Pleasures, till the most extreme Misery, like a sudden Clap of Thunder, rous'd him from his Lethargy.

As

The Indulgent Father. 41

As he squandered his Patrimony, so do we, most of us, lavish away our Time, without the least Reflection on the End for which it is allow'd us: Old Age leads us gradually to the Mouth of the Grave, which stares us in the Face before we have once seriously thought, that the Sentence of Death is inevitably pass'd upon all Mortals, and that we begin our Journey to his dark Mansions the Moment we begin to live. Would we sedately consider both what we are, and what we pursue, we should find nothing in ourselves to raise our Vanity, nothing in the Objects we desire worth our Care.

And he arose, and came to his Father. Ver. 20.

WHEN the Prodigal was, by his Wants, forced upon Reflection, he immediately compares his own wretched Condition with the happy Situation of, even, his Father's Servants: *They have, says he, Bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with Hunger!* This naturally led him to

G

turn

42 *The Indulgent Father.*

turn his Thought upon his Father's Tenderness, by which encourag'd, he resolves to go to him, make an humble Acknowledgment of his Folly, and hopes he may, by his Repentance, find so much Compassion yet existing in the Breast of that good Parent, as to be admitted one of his hired Servants; he is so thorowly convinc'd of his Error, that, self-condemn'd, he cannot entertain a Thought of being reinstated as a Son. Having determin'd upon his Return, he instantly begins his Journey: had he long consider'd upon it, he might have been habituated to his Misery, and Custom might have made it tolerable. Thus, should we take Advantage of the happy Moments of Grace; for reflecting on the wretched State of Sin, in which we are involv'd, will little avail us, without we resolve to quit its Tyranny, and return to the Arms of our merciful Father, ever open to receive the Penitent. A Reflection on his Goodness will be of no Service, without we take the Methods proper to experience it; we must immediately enter upon our Journey,

and

The Indulgent Father. 43

and at once fly our filthy Companions, our obscene Diet, Swine and Husks; or we may, by continuing long thus accompanied, and thus fed, forget that there is a more eligible Condition, which we may enjoy.

But when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had Compassion, and ran, and fell upon his Neck, and kissed him. Ver. 20.

THIS wise and tender Parent foresaw the Consequence of his Son's Folly, and expecting his Return, was impatiently watching for it: when it happen'd, his Affection got the better of his Resentment, for having obstinately left his House; stifled the Anger which his Extravagance had justly merited, and, instead of Chastisement, prevail'd on him to shew not only Mercy, but even a paternal Fondness; his Son's Return effaces his Fault, and his wretched Condition

44 *The Indulgent Father.*

moves him to Compassion: he thinks the Spendthrift sufficiently punish'd by his Sufferings, and therefore will pour Oil into his Wounds; he has Compassion on him, runs, falls upon his Neck, and kisses him. Had he barely admitted him into his House, on the Footing of a menial Servant, the Son would have thought himself happy: but how great, nay, inutterable, must be his Joy, meeting with so engaging a Reception! and how severe must his Reflections upon his own Conduct prove, when he experienced such inexhaustible Goodness in his slighted Parent! The Father's Tendernefs will not allow him to expect his Son's Approach, and to receive him with a Gravity becoming his Character; he lays that aside, and forgetting the Dignity of a Parent, and the Respect which both that Distinction and his Years ought to exact, he prevents his Arrival, and gives him no Leisure for his Excuses; or at least, he is deaf to every thing but his Affections, of which he gives the strongest Demonstration by every individual Action;

He

The Indulgent Father. 45

*He runs, he falls on his Neck, he kisses him; and by these Proofs of Tenderneſs, ſpeaks his Pardon and Reconciliation. How are we here encourag'd to hope, that our heavenly Father will, upon our Return, draw a Sponge over our Offences, and receive the Penitent to Mercy! Chriſt, to encourage us to return, made uſe of this Parable; and the Scriptures in a great Number of Places call the Almighty the God of Mercy, but mention him as the God of Hoſts not above thirty times: How far do his Mercies exceed the Number of his Punishments in Holy Writ; and how is that Divine Maſteſty, in thoſe ſacred Books, repreſented to us as grieving at our ſtubborn rejecting the Offers of his ſaving Grace! " O Jeruſa-
" ſalem, Jeruſalem, which killeſt the Pro-
" phets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto
" thee; how often would I have gathered
" thy Children together, as a Hen doth
" gather her Brood under her Wings, and
" ye would not! Luke xiii. 34. Come now
" and let us reaſon together, ſaith the
" Lord: though your Sins be as Scarlet,
" they*

46 The Indulgent Father.

“ they shall be as white as Snow ; though
“ they be red like Crimson, they shall be as
“ Wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye
“ shall eat the Good of the Land, Isa. i. 18,
“ 19. For a small Moment have I for-
“ saken thee, but with great Mercies will
“ I gather thee. In a little Wrath I hid
“ my Face from thee for a Moment, but with
“ everlasting Kindness will I have Mercy
“ on thee, Isa. liv. 7, 8. Incline your Ear,
“ and come unto me : hear, and your Soul
“ shall live. Let the Wicked forsake his
“ Way, and the unrighteous Man his
“ Thoughts : and let him return unto the
“ Lord, and he will have Mercy upon
“ him, and will abundantly pardon, Isa.
“ lv. 3, 7. I dwell with him that is of a
“ contrite and humble Spirit, Isa. lvii. 15.
“ Return, thou backsliding Israel, and I
“ will not cause mine Anger to fall upon
“ you ; for I am merciful, and I will not
“ keep Anger for ever : only acknowledge
“ thine Iniquity, that thou hast transgres-
“ sed against the Lord thy God, and hast
“ not obeyed his Voice, Jer. iii. 12, 13.
“ O Jerusalem, wash thine Heart from
Wick-

The Indulgent Father. 47

“ *Wickedness, that thou mayst be saved:*
“ *how long shall thy vain Thoughts lodge*
“ *within thee? Jer. iv. 14. What mean*
“ *ye, that ye use this Proverb, saying, The*
“ *Fathers have eaten sour Grapes, and*
“ *the Childrens Teeth are set on edge?*
“ *Ezek. xviii. 2. Have I any Pleasure*
“ *at all that the Wicked should die, and*
“ *not that he should return from his Ways*
“ *and live? When the Wicked turneth*
“ *away from his Wickedness that he hath*
“ *committed, and doth that which is law-*
“ *ful and right, he shall save his Soul*
“ *alive. Because he considereth, and turn-*
“ *eth away from all his Transgressions that*
“ *he hath committed, he shall surely live,*
“ *he shall not die. Are not my Ways*
“ *equal? Repent, and turn your selves from*
“ *all your Transgressions; so Iniquity shall*
“ *not be your Ruin. Cast away from you*
“ *all your Transgressions, whereby ye have*
“ *transgressed, and make you a new Heart,*
“ *and a new Spirit, for why will ye die?*
“ *I have no Pleasure in the Death of him*
“ *that dieth, wherefore turn your selves,*
“ *and live ye, Ezek. xviii. 23, 27, 28, 29,*
“ 30,

48 *The Indulgent Father.*

“ 30, 31, 32. Turn ye, turn ye, from
 “ *your evil Ways; for why will ye die?*
 “ Ezek. xxxiii. 11. *I have blotted out, as*
 “ *a thick Cloud, thy Transgressions, and*
 “ *as a Cloud, thy Sins: return unto me,*
 “ *for I have redeemed thee, Isa. xlv. 22.*
 “ *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy*
 “ *Transgressions for mine own sake, and*
 “ *will not remember thy Sins, Isa. xliii. 25.*
 “ *For I will not contend for ever; neither*
 “ *will I be always wroth, Isa. lvii. 16.”*

With what Compassion does the benign
 CREATOR solicit us to have Pity
 upon ourselves! What Concern does
 he condescend to express for our Hap-
 piness! and with what paternal Ten-
 derness does he assure us of Mercy!
 Though our Sins be as Scarlet, yet will
 he cleanse, purge and restore us to his
 Favour; if in Wrath he turns his Face
 away, yet is his Anger but for a short
 Duration; he pities our Weakness, and
 with stretched-out Arms is ready not only
 to receive, but to meet us, upon a Re-
 turn from our Folly and Rebellion, as we
 are taught by his blessed Son in the Pa-
 rable

The Indulgent Father. 49

nable now before us. Can any of us read the repeated and moving Offers of his God; hear him condescend to reason with his Creatures, and not be melted into Tears; not feel an inward Compunction, and in the bitterest Terms, not reproach his own Ingratitude in having offended this divine inexhaustible Source of Goodness, and not immediately take Advantage of the offer'd Grace by a speedy Repentance, an humble Acknowledgment of his Sins, and Unworthiness of that Pardon, which can spring from no other Fountain, but the unbounded Compassion of our CREATOR? What is it that blinds us to our Interest? Can we give ourselves up to the imperfect, the fleeting Pleasures of this momentary and uncertain Life so far, as to forget those solid and eternal Joys for which we were created, and yet call ourselves rational Beings? Has any Man, after having wasted Years in a voluptuous Course, ever reap'd other Fruit, than cruel Reflections, Shame and Repentance? The Days we have lived are like

50 *The Indulgent Father.*

a Dream; those to come will, in like manner, be as those pass'd, but still will have the same Effect, viz. hand us forward to the Grave and Eternity, which must be blessed, or miserable, as we have husbanded or squandered the Time allotted us here on Earth for our Preparation.

But the Father said to his Servants, Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him, and put a Ring on his Hand, and Shoes on his Feet. And bring hither the fatted Calf, &c.
Ver. 22, 23.

THE Indulgent Father is not satisfied with his first Demonstrations of Joy, for the Return of a Son, who had recover'd his Senses, absorb'd in Sensuality; he still goes farther, and his Forgiveness is follow'd by his Liberality; he cloaths him with the best Robe, makes a Feast for his Reception, and restores him to those Rights

The Indulgent Father. 51

Rights he had justly forfeited. Would any Stranger have imagin'd this Son had extravagantly lavish'd his Share of his Father's Substance, seeing him thus caress'd, thus cloath'd and feasted! Here is figured to us the Compassion of our heavenly Father; an earthly Parent is commonly less ready to forgive, as he may doubt the Sincerity of the Penitent; and therefore, before he will be thro'ly reconciled, will wait some Time to be convinc'd of it by the Fruit of his Repentance: But our Celestial Parent sees the Heart, and needs not the Proof of Time to satisfy him that we really are what we profess ourselves, and therefore is more immediately reconciled, and restores us to his Mercy. We are by this Liberality, this Joy of the Father in the Parable, encourag'd to hope, notwithstanding we have made an ill Use of the Mercies we have already experienced, that the Almighty will not reproach us with our Mismanagement, but continue the same liberal Dispensation, when we cordially implore it, and turn to him with our

52 The Indulgent Father.

whole Hearts ; For, “ The Lord is full
 “ of Compassion and Mercy, Long-suffer-
 “ ing, and of great Goodness. He will
 “ not alway be chiding ; neither keepeth
 “ he his Anger for ever. He hath not
 “ dealt with us after our Sins, nor re-
 “ warded us according to our Wickednesses.
 “ For look how high the Heaven is in com-
 “ parison of the Earth, so great is his
 “ Mercy also toward them that fear him.
 “ Look how wide also the East is from
 “ the West, so far hath he set our Sins
 “ from us. Yea, like as a Father pitieth
 “ his own Children, even so is the Lord
 “ merciful unto them that fear him. For
 “ he knoweth whereof we are made, he
 “ remembreth that we are but Dust, Psal.
 “ ciii. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.” Should
 not this Tenderness open our Eyes, and
 make us look into ourselves ; make us
 reflect on the Sublimity of the Offended,
 and the Meanness of the Offender : The
 one an infinite glorious BEING, the Au-
 thor of all Things ; the other an impo-
 tent, crazy, transitory CREATURE, sub-
 ject to innumerable Accidents ! And
 ought

The Indulgent Father. 53

ought not this Reflection to make the Mercies we poor Reptiles daily receive from that Incomprehensible, Eternal Deity, and those with which he hourly courts us, Subjects of Astonishment, and with Job, to *abhor ourselves, and repent in Dust and Ashes!* Job xlii. 6. nay, if not encourag'd by his unlimited Goodness, his paternal Commiseration, think it the highest Presumption for such polluted Wretches to address ourselves to his exalted and immaculate MAJESTY, or to imagine we are worthy his least Regard; so great, so far beyond all Degrees of Comparison, is the vast Difference between us momentary CREATURES, whose Lives are like a Shadow, and that Eternal GOD, whom notwithstanding we dare to offend, yet deigns to pardon. His Mercy is infinite; but let us not so far build upon it, as to forget his Justice is so also; and that the Promises his Compassion makes us are conditional. As we have sinned with the Prodigal, we must also return with him, if we will find a Reception. His Father's Tendernefs had
been

54 *The Indulgent Father.*

been of no Use to him, had he continu'd in a distant Country ; and the Mercy of our God will nothing avail us, we shall be no way benefited by this amiable Attribute of the Divinity, if we do not turn to him *with all our Hearts, and with all our Souls.* We must seek him ; “ For if ye seek him, he will be found of you ; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.”
2 Chron. xv. 2.

And they began to be merry.

Ver. 24.

THE Joy of the Father is diffused through the whole Family ; he will have every one participate in his Satisfaction ; a Son, who was lost, is found again ; a Son, who was dead, with regard to his Indulgent Parent, is restor'd to Life ; he sees a Child, of whom he had, in a manner, lost all Hopes, sensible of his Weakness, repenting his Rebellion, acknowledging his Errors, sincerely contrite, fall at his Feet with unfeigned Humility, sue for Pardon, and beg to be again admitted :

The Indulgent Father. 55

ted: not as a Son; not as one who expected any farther Provision to be made for him; he is too sensible that he had justly forfeited all such Hopes, but as a menial Servant. His Domesticks share in the Pleasure their Master shews for having retrieved his Son; they are all rejoiced, and shew their Mirth by Musick and Dancing: This universal Joy, describ'd to us, heightens the Character of the Father's Humanity; for we are seldom affected with the Satisfaction of our Superiors, if they are not also our Benefactors; and we are more inclin'd, by the Depravity of our Nature, to envy and repine at such Turns of Fortune, as give them cause to rejoice, than we are to give sincere Demonstrations of our being pleased.

THE elder Brother, who was in the Field, returning home, hears the Mirth, and enquires into the Cause; with which he is so much displeas'd, that he refuses to enter. What Difference between a Father and a Brother! one is entirely guided

56 *The Indulgent Father.*

guided by Nature; in the other, Nature is banished by Interest, in which he fears he shall suffer. The Father hearing he is dissatisfied, condescends to go out and entreat him. But he answers this good Parent with Reproaches, *Lo, these many Years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy Commandment, and yet thou never gavest me a Kid, that I might make merry with my Friends. But as soon as this thy Son was come, which hath devoured thy Living with Harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted Calf,* Luke xv. 29, 30. In other Words, "How partial, how unjust, is this Procedure! I, who have been a faithful Steward to you, who have ever been intent upon, and in all Things consulted your Interest, who have served you for many Years with equal Alacrity and Industry; I, who never refused, or even disputed, your Commands, have not as yet experienced any thing like this Indulgence; To me you never gave so much as a Kid, that I might entertain and make merry with my Acquaintance; but, for this darling
Son

The Indulgent Father. 57

Son of yours, who has in Riot and Debauchery thrown away your Substance, nothing is too good, nothing too costly; he is welcomed home with all possible Demonstrations of Joy, as if his Extravagance had entitl'd him to your Favour, and you would publicly reward his Licentiousness: for him you have killed the fatted Calf; and instead of his meeting with a just Reprimand, he is receiv'd with Feasting, and the universal Acclamations of your Family. Can I deem this other than an unjust Partiality, since my long Services have never extorted from you the least Token of your being pleas'd with my Care and Obedience? Would it not have been sufficient to have given him Shelter in your House? nay, was it not more than he could reasonably expect, if he has any Remains of Modesty? But to receive him, who ought to have apprehended appearing in your Sight; to receive him, I say, with such Marks of Tenderneſs, ſuch Transports of Joy, is, in ſome Degree, applauding his deteſtable and riotous Courſes, and en-

58 *The Indulgent Father.*

couraging him to a second Sally: He may reasonably conclude from this indulgent Reception, that whatever Vices he may again run into, whatever Profusion he may be guilty of, he shall, if driven to the most wretched Condition, by his Diffipation, find Refuge in your Tender-ness; and may not I, on the other hand, as reasonably suppose, that my Care and Vigilance in your Affairs, my exact Obedience to all your Commands; my filial Observance; is to no Purpose, and that you esteem my Services as the Performance of my Duty only, which merits no Return? Is it just, that the Fruit of my Oeconomy should be squander'd in the feeding his Vices? And is it possible, that your Affection for him can make you so partial with regard to me?" To this the Parent answers, *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine*, Luke xv. 31. "Thou hast an absolute Command over all I possess, and to make thee a particular Present, would be tacitly denying thee Power over the whole; thou hast never been under any Restriction,

The Indulgent Father. 59

tion, and whatever thou hadst thought proper to have dispos'd of, would have always met with my Approbation. I never griev'd for thy Absence, therefore have had no Opportunity to rejoice for thy Return; I have all along had the Pleasure of having thee with me, and thou hast always experienced my paternal Fondness; for, as I have thrown on thee the Care of my Affairs, so have I also given thee Power over all I have, and thy Industry is for thine own Benefit: but thou dost not consider that thou speakest to a Father, an Appellation thou art as yet a Stranger to; this, my Son, was lost to me; I bewailed him as irretrievably *lost*; as a Son, whom there was no Probability of my seeing more, a Son, who was expos'd to all the Allurements of a vicious World, and very little able, by the Weakness of his unripe Judgment, to foresee the ruinous Consequences of listening to such Temptations, as would assail and necessarily hurry him on to Want, Contempt and Misery: In a word, *This thy Brother was dead, and is alive*

60 *The Indulgent Father.*

again; and was lost, and is found, Luke xv. 32. Tho', driven on by his Passions, he was deaf to my Admonitions, foresaw no Danger, and threw off the Duty of a Son, yet cannot I forget that I am a Father: A Father to you both; and my receiving the Penitent to Mercy, ought not to be interpreted a partial Affection. You may object that his Return is owing to his wretched Condition, and not to a Sense of his Error; but that would be making an uncharitable and unnatural Construction: let what will have been the Motive which brought him back, I am his Father; and he has already too severely suffer'd by his Follies, for me to reproach him with his *Conduct*. You say, the Reception he has found is sufficient to encourage him to another Sally, and I am of Opinion, that he is so thoro'ly convinc'd of the Nothingness of those Pleasures he pursued, which were the Harbingers of the Miseries he experienc'd, that the former cannot allure, and the others must make him dread the leaving a second time the House of a tender Father,

The Indulgent Father. 61

ther, who can have no Views, but his Child's Good, in the Counsels he gives him : But had I refus'd to receive him, or had I only admitted him to take Shelter in my House, and have banish'd him my Presence, what, but his Despair, must have been the Consequence ? Whom should I have punish'd by my Rigour ? Should not I myself have suffer'd, not only by checking the free Course of my Affections, but very greatly, by putting on a Face of Austerity, and making my Tongue run counter to the Dictates of my Heart ? If by this affected Severity I should have made him taken the desperate Resolution of flying my House, as more intolerable than any Misfortunes he could apprehend, while he was in Search of that Bread from Strangers a cruel Father had deny'd him ; the continual Apprehensions I should have been in, the Reflection on the many Dangers to which my barbarous Policy had expos'd him, and the bitter Reproaches I should have made myself, would have robb'd me of all Peace of Mind, made me insensible
of

62 *The Indulgent Father.*

of every after Satisfaction; (properly speaking, there would have been none for me;) and have brought my grey Hairs with Haste and Sorrow to the Grave. But say, To what End should I have carried this outside Appearance of Cruelty, which must have laid me under a most galling Restraint, while I kept on the Mask? Perhaps you will reply, that such a Procedure would have answer'd the Dignity and Authority of a Parent; and I think it would much rather have been an Indication of a Tyrannick Disposition: if it had not been follow'd by such fatal Consequences as I have mentioned, yet must it have aliened the Affections of my Son, and by degrees have wrought him up to hate the Man, whose Sight was a Terror; the Appellation of Father would have lost all that Tenderness it carries with it, and have been joined with no other Idea, than that of an offended, cruel, and irreconcilable Tyrant; and thus, to punish my Son for what is past, and cannot be recall'd, I should have liv'd myself in continual Torment; and to keep up an
un-

The Indulgent Father. 63

unreasonable Authority, like some Parents of weak Judgments, and haughty Spirits, who push it to an unjustifiable Extent, have lost the Heart of my Child, have chang'd a Son for a Slave, and have made him, who must now esteem my Death his greatest Misfortune, hourly wish to see me in my Grave, as the greatest Good that could happen to him : If Nature has invested the Parent with Authority, she has also given him Affections to moderate, and Reason to direct it. Where Correction is for the Child's Good, Lenity would deviate into Cruelty ; but when Severity cannot redress what is past, or be of Use for hereafter, that Parent does not make a right Use of his Authority, who will, in such case, rigorously exert it ; and the Child may justly conclude, that his Austerity is a Complaisance to himself, a gratifying of his own Passions ; tho' he may obey, he can hardly love ; and tho' he may tremble at the Sight of such a Father, his servile Fear must necessarily banish all natural Affection : and surely he must be of a
very

64 *The Indulgent Father.*

very narrow Spirit, who can tyrannize over those who dare not so much as whisper their Sufferings, and that prefers a constrain'd Obedience to a chearful, affectionate, and liberal Performance of Duty, impos'd by either Law or Nature."

THUS, our infinitely merciful Father allows for our Weakness, the Frailty of Flesh and Blood, and accepts our Repentance, tho' we have often rejected the Offers of his Grace, stopp'd our Ears to his fatherly Calls and Remonstrances, and fondly follow'd the Directions of our Passions. Nay, tho' we have never once reflected upon his Forbearance and Long-suffering, which have allow'd us to go on, for Years, in a Course of Sin and Rebellion; tho' we have never once turn'd our Thoughts Heaven-wards, or mention'd his holy Name, but to profane it, and are awaken'd to a Sense of our Wickedness by the consequential Miseries which attend it; yet, are the Arms of his Mercy extended to receive us; he will not suffer his Justice to prevail over his Compassion;

The Indulgent Father. 65

sion ; he looks upon us the Work of his Hands, on whom he has stamp'd his own Image ; as the Purchase of his Blood, by which he rescued us from eternal Death ; accepts of our Repentance ; suffers the Tears of our Penitence to quench the reddened Bolt of his Anger, and the Acknowledgment of our Crimes to disarm his Wrath. Our Return to our Duty effaces every Trace of our Rebellion ; and tho' our Humility, arising from a just Sense of our Transgressions, will allow us to hope for nothing beyond a Remission of our Sins, and an Exemption from Punishment, which Hope is grounded on his infallible Promise, yet will his Goodness reinstate us in his Favour, and he will continue to us the tender Affection of a Father, of which his Mercy gives us that unerring Token, of a calm and quiet Conscience ; a Blessing, beyond all the Pleasures that the Pomp, the Titles, the Power, the Riches, the distant Respect, the Praise and Observance the World can afford ! A Treasure, beyond all Degrees of Comparison more valuable than

K

all

66 *The Indulgent Father.*

all the Treasures of the Earth, as it is not to be purchased by all the Diamonds of the *Indies*, and the additional Riches of *Peru*, or to be attained by universal Power ! A Jewel, more likely to be found in a Cell, than in a Palace, which the general Applause of Man cannot give, nor the Contempt of the whole World force from us.

THE Father in this Parable is describ'd as an humane, indulgent, and considerate Parent, our Saviour intending principally by it, to strengthen our Hopes of finding Mercy, however great had been our Offences against our Heavenly Father ; and possibly at the same time, by the Example of this, to instruct Parents in their Duty. For it is certain, there is a reciprocal Duty between Parents and their Children ; as the latter are oblig'd to Obedience, so are the former to have some Regard to the Weakness, and make some Allowance for the Inexperience of Youth, and not too strictly punish, because they have the Power, every little Oversight :

nei-

The Indulgent Father. 67

neither ought they to carry their Authority with an unreasonable high Hand, and thwart their Children merely to please themselves. *Ye Fathers, provoke not your Children to Wrath*, Ephes. vi. 4. Lenity becomes the Character of a Parent; and the Father in the Parable teaches us, that Parents should admit the Humiliation of their Children, and receive them to Favour, when they acknowledge and repent them of their Offences. But how few Fathers copy after this Example! How many treat their Children with the Severity of an *Egyptian* Taskmaster, and, by their Behaviour, shew less of Nature than the brute Creation, either by giving way to their own tyrannick Tempers, or by a wrong Policy being always terrible! How many ruin them by the other Extreme, an Over-fondness, by indulging their Humours in every thing; and how many have, thro' a sordid Covetousness, been dead to Nature, and denying their Children the Necessaries of Life, forc'd them into the Commission of the vilest Crimes, perpetrating the most flagitious

68 *The Indulgent Father.*

Villanies for a Support, and thus brought them to shameful Ends, or to the Scandal of being publickly sentenced, tho' the Prince's Mercy may have averted the Punishment, which ought more justly to have been inflicted on the Parent, whose Avarice had forc'd his Son upon such criminal Methods for Bread! We have a flagrant Example of this in the late Queen's Reign; A Gentleman, distinguish'd by a Title, and extremely rich; by his Avarice drove his Children from him: as his Covetousness had formerly deny'd them an Education, and when grown up, refus'd them a Support, one of them, who robb'd for Bread, was taken committing Sacrilege, was try'd for the Fact, which was plainly prov'd, and he condemn'd to the Gallows; but the Queen's Mercy interposing, sav'd his Life.

THO' the Laws of Men take no Notice of the Barbarity of Parents, who either by their natural Propensity to Despotism, tyrannize over, and force their
 Chil-

The Indulgent Father. 69

Children to prefer any Course of Life to that of an incessant, slavish Observance, which, however, has no Effect, and by which they see no Likelihood of putting an End to their Sufferings; or else, by their Covetousness, force them to the meanest and vilest Methods to support Life, yet must they render an Account of this Procedure before that God, from whom, without Reason, they expect Mercy, as they will not themselves practise it.

GOD is figur'd to us with Passions, that we may be able to have some Idea of that infinitely sublime Being: but 'tis certain, that he cannot be actuated by any; every Attribute is God; when we say he is Pure, Just, and Merciful, it is to descend to the Meanness of our Understanding; for that ineffable *Ens Entium* is Purity, Justice, and Mercy itself, in the greatest Sublimity; and we are the more nearly united to, or separated from, that Fountain of all Goodness, as we copy after, or neglect the Practice of, these Attributes.

How

70 *The Indulgent Father.*

How can the cruel Man, if so but to his Beasts, not to mention his Children, expect to be united to that God of Mercy? and if for ever disjoin'd from that Spring of Life, Is it not a necessary Consequence that he must be eternally swallow'd up in Death? I mean not a literal Death, for I am afraid there are many so given up to their Passions, that they would be glad of Annihilation: let them however not flatter themselves with such an Impossibility; for as the Soul is an Emanation from the divine Being, which is eternal, it must also be eternal; for nothing flowing from what is eternal can ever cease to be. As well may the Inhumane expect that Fire and Water will mingle, as hope he can ever be united to infinite Mercy, without he repents his Cruelty: Nay, the Love of Mercy is one of the express Conditions of this Union, or, in another Expression, of our Salvation.

*"Keep Mercy and Judgment, and wait
"on thy God continually, Hosea xii. 6.
"He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is
"good; and what doth the Lord require
of*

The Indulgent Father. 71

*" of thee, but to do justly, and to love
" Mercy? Micah vi. 8. And Mercy is
again recommended by the wisest of Men,
as a sure Method to conciliate the Favour
of God; " Let not Mercy and Truth for-
" sake thee; bind them about thy Neck;
" write them upon the Table of thine Heart.
" So shalt thou find Favour and good Un-
" derstanding in the Sight of God and Man,
Prov. iii. 3, 4. We see, to induce us to
this amiable Virtue, he shews that we
may expect not only future, but present
Blessings; " Mercy and Truth preserve
" the King; and his Throne is upholden by
" Mercy, Prov. xx. 28. He that follow-
" eth after Righteousness and Mercy, find-
" eth Life, Righteousness and Honour,
" Prov. xxi. 21. By Mercy and Truth
" Iniquity is purged, Prov. xvi. 6. He
" that hath Mercy on the Poor, happy is
" he, Prov. xiv. 21. The merciful Man
" doth Good to his own Soul: but he that
" is cruel, troubleth his own Flesh, Prov.
" xi. 17. And we find the Want of
Mercy is enumerated among the Reasons
of God's Anger; " Hear the Word of the
" Lord,*

72 *The Indulgent Father.*

*“ Lord, ye Children of Israel: for the
 “ Lord hath a Controversy with the Inha-
 “ bitants of the Land, because there is no
 “ Truth, nor Mercy, nor Knowledge of
 “ God in the Land, Hosea iv. 1. Where*
 the not knowing of God seems as a natu-
 ral Consequence of the Want of Truth
 and Mercy. And God himself tells us,
 that he prefers our Practice of this Virtue
 to the Forms and Ceremonies of Worship;
“ For I desired Mercy, and not Sacrifice.
 In the 109th Psalm, after a Number of
 Imprecations, which take up the ten fore-
 going Verses, *David*, in the 16th Verse,
 gives the Reason of his pouring forth
 these Curses, viz. *“ Because he remem-
 “ bred not to shew Mercy.”* It is not only
 recommended to us as a Virtue, which
 will make our God propitious, but we
 are even assured by the Mouth of his
 blessed Son, that we shall be rewarded by
 finding Mercy; our Saviour's own Words
 are, *“ Blessed are the Merciful: for they
 “ shall obtain Mercy, Matt. v. 7.* And
 again, Jesus Christ announces a Woe to
 them who do not practise it; *“ Woe unto
 “ you,*

The Indulgent Father. 73

*“ you, Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites,
“ for ye pay Tithe of Mint and Anise,
“ and have omitted the weightier Matters
“ of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Faith,
Matt. xxiii. 23. St. James denounces a
heavy Sentence on the Cruel, in the 2d
Chapter, and 13th Verse, of his General
Epistle, “ He shall have Judgment with-
“ out Mercy, that hath shewed no Mercy.”
On the contrary, the royal Prophet says,
that the Merciful shall experience the
Mercy of God, “ With the merciful thou
“ wilt shew thyself merciful. And the
Divine Mercy is set us as a Pattern for
our copying after, “ Be ye merciful, as
“ your Father also is merciful, Luke vi. 36.
A great Number of Texts may be cited
from the holy Scriptures to the same Pur-
pose, the encouraging us to Mercy, and
detering us from Cruelty. Tho’ nume-
rous as they are, and great as are, on
the one hand, the Rewards of exercising
this Virtue, and on the Other, the Pu-
nishment with which Tyranny, or want
of Mercy is menaced, we find they have
but little Effect on the stubborn and cruel
Hearts of Men.*

L

IT

74 *The Indulgent Father.*

IT is indeed not so wonderful to see Parents treat their Children inhumanly, where they are naturally of an hard and uncommiserating Nature ; but to see Fathers torment themselves to mortify their Children, is more unaccountable, tho' not less common. I can attribute this to nothing but to an Obstinacy of Temper, a wrong Turn of Judgment, or a Meanness of Spirit, which makes them triumph over the only Thing in their Power to command, tho' they suffer inwardly, in the Sufferings of their Children, of whom they are really fond : But they had rather endure this Torture, than not force their Children to a Compliance with their Will, however unreasonable: *I am his Parent; he shall buckle to me; my Commands shall not be disputed; I will not condescend to alledge Reasons to my Children; I will hear no Remonstrances; they are not to answer, but to obey; if they are wiser than their Father, let them pursue their own Methods, provide for themselves, they shall have no Support from me.* This is commonly the Language which we hear from such self-will'd

The Indulgent Father. 75

will'd Parents, who not seldom by their Behaviour give a Child, for whom they have the utmost Tenderness, Ground to believe himself the Object of his Father's Hate; and when once he is possess'd with this Notion, he becomes remiss in his Duty, and cool in his Affections; he thinks it vain to hope for any thing from a Father, who, he is persuaded, has no Affection for him; he grows careless of the World's Opinion, and runs into such Courses for a Support, as are scandalous and destructive, if not criminal: How many young Gentlemen, by the Obstinacy of their Parents, fall into unaccountable Extravagancies, get into the Books of every Tradesman, who will give them Credit; take up Money (if the Estate is entail'd upon them) at extravagant Premiums, and usurious Interest; or Goods at one Shop, to sell them at another for half Price, and thus squander an Estate before they possess it? Numbers, no doubt, may justly lay all their Extravagancies at the Doors of their inexorable, perverse Parents, who would have liv'd

76 *The Indulgent Father.*

with Prudence, had they been allow'd to have liv'd any way answerable to their Births and Expectations, which to require, was look'd upon an Insolence, a Sort of Rebellion, a monstrous Extravagance, and has turn'd some into the World to shift for even Bread. The Ruin of many promising Youths has been owing to the Penury or Obstinacy of their Parents, in whose Loss even the Publick has suffer'd.

THERE is another Cruelty of Parents, which I mention'd, the too great Indulgence shewn to their Children: this is most often found among People of the lower Rank, and is owing either to their Ignorance, Indolence, or Self-Love. They either know not how to keep a just Medium, or will not give themselves the Trouble; or the Fondness they have for their Offspring is such, that they cannot bear the Pain they themselves suffer by their Correction. But whatever may be the Cause, the humouring of Children is of a pernicious Consequence; as they grow up, they daily become more headstrong;

The Indulgent Father. 77

strong; the Indulgence of the Parent is repaid with a Contempt both of his Advice and Authority; the Youth grows wise in his own Eyes, is puffed up with a fond Conceit of himself, and being guided by his own Judgment, it is no Wonder if he runs into a Sea of Misfortunes.

SOME Parents are, in their true Characters, the Reverse of this considerate Father in the Parable; they will make no Allowance for want of Experience, the Prevalency of Example, or the Heat of Youth, which does not allow Time to consider Consequences. If a Son has been guilty of some Inadvertencies, with such Fathers, an Acknowledgment of the Error, the most circumspect Behaviour for the future, the most humble Observance, will not be sufficient to efface the Memory of his Fault, tho' really trivial, or skreen him from daily Reproaches: Till the Son, tired out by his Efforts for a Reconciliation, throws off all farther Care to please, finding it to be altogether vain,
and,

78 *The Indulgent Father.*

and, loosing the Reins to his Passions, grows insensible of Reproof, to which he is become inur'd by a constant Repetition; and to revenge himself on this irreconcilable and obstinate Temper, runs headlong to his own Destruction, which alone has Efficacy sufficient to open the Eyes, and awaken the Reflection of the harden'd Father. But, that I may not be misunderstood, to justify the Indiscretions of Youth, and to charge Parents as the Authors of all the wild Sallies, egregious Follies, licentious Courses, and thoughtless Extravagancies, which the Sons of many prudent and affectionate Parents have been guilty of, I shall take Notice of the Duty of a Child.

WERE we not commanded, by the Laws of God, to reverence and obey our Parents, yet should we be bound to pay them an observant Duty, to honour, and if ever they stood in need, to assist and support them from Principles of Gratitude; since it is to their tender Care, that we owe our being succoured when we
were

The Indulgent Father. 79

were incapable of helping ourselves; for of the whole Creation, Man, in his State of Infancy, is certainly the most defenceless and the most helpless Creature. But our Obligations do not cease here; for when their careful Fondness has, with insuperable Patience, carried us thro' this infant State, it does not desert us, but continues to exert itself in cultivating our Minds, and providing for both our future temporal and eternal Happiness: according to our different Stations, it provides for us Masters or Tutors, when we are of an Age fit to be instructed, by whom we are taught what is Good and Evil, and our Minds form'd by the Precepts of Religion and Virtue; or we are, at their Expence, taught some useful Art or Trade, by which we may be able to provide for ourselves an honest and creditable Support. Nay, their Care still pursues us, and they are anxious, when we have attain'd to Years of Maturity, for our farther Welfare. I speak in general; for I have already shewn that there have been, and still are, Parents, who would
sacri-

80 *The Indulgent Father.*

sacrifice their Childrens Interests to the Gratifications of their own Passions: In general I may be allow'd to say, that the Care and Tenderneſs of a Parent has no determined End, but with his Life.

WE are not however bound, by the Laws of Nature, Justice, and Gratitude only, to honour, cherish and obey those who are the Authors of our Life, but it is a Duty strictly enjoyn'd us by God himself, the Neglect of which exposes us to the Contempt and Hatred of all good Men, and has been often visibly punish'd, in this Life, by the great Dispenser of Rewards and Punishments. *Honour thy Father and Mother, is the first Commandment with Promise*, Ephes. vi. 2. The making such Retaliation as is in our Power for the Care, Tenderneſs, and anxious Concern of our Parents, in rearing us, is esteem'd Piety. *Let them learn first to shew Piety at home, and to requite their Parents*, 1 Tim. v. 4. Solomon exhorts us to respect our Parents; *Hearken to thy Father that begat thee, and despise not*

The Indulgent Father. 81

not thy Mother when she is old, Prov. xxiii.

22. And surely nothing can be more just, than to comfort and support them in their old Age, to bear with their Infirmities, to make the Burthen of their Years as little irksome to them as possibly we can, and to render their latter Days easy and quiet, who supported the Weakness of our Infancy, and the Follies of our Youth. In the Enumeration of the Abominations of *Israel*, the Slight shewn to Parents is reckoned, *In thee have they set Light by Father and Mother, Ezek. xxii. 7.* And the treating them with Contempt, is attended with a solemn Curse: *Cursed be he that setteth light by his Father or his Mother; and all the People shall say, Amen, Deut. xxvii. 16.* *The Eye that mocketh at his Father, and despiseth to obey his Mother, the Ravens of the Valley shall pick it out, and the young Eagles shall eat it, Prov. xxx. 17.* A Curse does not only follow our Disobedience to Parents, but a Punishment is by the old Law inflicted, and more than once enforced: *Every one that curseth his*

M

Father

82 *The Indulgent Father.*

Father or his Mother, shall be surely put to Death: He hath cursed his Father or his Mother; his Blood be upon him. Lev. xx. 9. He that smiteth his Father or his Mother, shall be surely put to Death. He that curseth his Father or his Mother, shall be surely put to Death, Exod. xxi. 15, 17. Whoso curseth his Father or his Mother, his Lamp shall be put out in obscure Darkness, Prov. xx. 20. If a Man have a stubborn and a rebellious Son, which will not obey the Voice of his Father, or the Voice of his Mother, and that when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his Father and his Mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the Elders of his City; and they shall say unto the Elders of his City, This our Son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our Voice; he is a Glutton and a Drunkard: And all the Men of his City shall stone him with Stones, that he die. Deut. xxi. 18, 19, 20, 21.

THE *Roman* Laws gave Fathers absolute Power over the Lives of their Children; and the same Power, I have heard, is lodged with the Fathers among the Inhabitants of *Madagascar*. There never was a Nation yet so barbarous, at least within the Compass of my reading, as to deny Honour and Obedience to Parents, or even Respect to Old Age. By our Common Law, a Parent has Interest in the Profits of his Childrens Labour, while under Age; and by the Statute of 43 *E. c. 2*. Children are oblig'd, if able, to provide for their poor and impotent Parents. I will conclude this Head with a Commandment of the Almighty's, and an Exhortation of *St. Paul's*, *Ye shall fear every Man his Mother and his Father, and keep my Sabbaths*, Lev. xix. 3. In which God joins our Duty to our Parents with that which is to be paid to himself. *St. Paul's* Advice is to both Parents and Children; *Children, obey your Parents in all things*; where we must understand just and reasonable; *for this is*

84 *The Indulgent Father.*

well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your Children to Anger, lest they be discouraged, Colof. iii. 20, 21.

T H O' 'tis possible (as I have already observ'd) our Saviour might in this Parable design to instruct Parents in their Duty, with regard to their Offspring, and by the Example of this Indulgent Father, shew the Amiability of a forgiving Temper, and thus recommend Lenity to Parents; yet this is but tacitly done, while 'tis evident, that his principal View was to encourage, even the most profligate Sinner, to hope for Mercy, upon turning from his Sins, and humbly and contritely imploring the inexhaustible Fountain of Compassion, to extend it to him: by the Son being driven to the greatest Extremity of Want, and to the vilest Servitude; and by his being receiv'd by a Father, who even goes out to meet him, and afterwards reinstated in the Degree of a Son; is figur'd to us, the most abandoned Sinner become sensible of his wretched Bondage, returning to a
mer-

The Indulgent Father. 85

merciful God, who meets him with the Offers of his Divine Grace, strengthens and restores him to that Degree of Favour, and affords him that Protection, which his Crimes had justly forfeited. I pray God we may all, by seriously reflecting on the Goodness of our great Creator, copy the Resolution of the Prodigal, and not only resolve to return to our Duty, but immediately put that Resolution in Practice: Arise, and throw ourselves, with true Compunction and Humility, at the Footstool of Divine Mercy; sincerely acknowledge our Sins, own our Unworthiness, and thus become proper Objects of Compassion, have our Pardon sealed, and be again numbred among the Children of God, *That when the Sun shall be darkened, and the Moon shall no more impart her Light; when the Stars shall fall from Heaven, the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken, Matt. xxiv. 29.: When the Son of Man shall come in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with him; and before him shall be gathered all Nations, whom he shall separate, Matt. xxv. 31, 32.; We*
may

86 *The Indulgent Father.*

may find ourselves on his Right-hand,
and hear his blisful Call, *Come, ye Blessed
of my Father, inherit the Kingdom pre-
pared for you from the Foundation of the
World, Matt. xxv. 34.*



nd,
sed
re-
the

A

A
Im

R

T

E

G

A N

H Y M N

T O T H E

A L M I G H T Y.

A Ngelick Hofts, the grateful Song inspire,
 Give Energy and Spirit to my Lays;
 Impart a Spark of your Celestial Fire;
 I fing with you the great JEHOVAH's Praise.

Replete with Blifs, of Blifs eternal flow,
 Before the Worlds thy mighty *Fiat* made,
 Thou everlasting Happinefs didft know;
 Nor could'ft THOU want *thy* humble
 Creature's Aid.

Eternal Glory compafs'd THEE around,
 Eternal Joys sublime, Eternal Peace:
 God, in himfelf eternal Pleafures found,
 No outward Object cou'd his Blifs increafe.

N

The

90 *An H Y M N to*

The gorgeous Light which vibrates round his
Throne,

Flashing intolerable endless Day,
Sprang from the glorious, the ALMIGHTY ONE,
In HIM, from HIM, is ev'ry dazling Ray.

Eternal Beauty, never-fading Youth,
Eternal Mercy, Wisdom Infinite;
Unbounded Pow'r, with never-failing Truth,
Eternal Glory, and Eternal Light;
Are the grand Attributes, which speak our God,
Are God himself; are the Eternal Mind:
Obsequious Worlds obey his awful Nod,
And their Existence in his Mercy find.

'Twas this alone to various Worlds gave Birth;
'Twas this did Planets and the Stars produce:
'Twas this, his Mercy, form'd the solid Earth;
To HIM, nor Stars, nor Earth, nor Planets
are of Use.

Can Bodies luminous, or Globes opaque,
Add to his Glory, or his boundless Pow'r?
Can helpless Creatures an Addition make
To what in all it was, was Infinite before?

Th' ALMIGHTY spoke, and his Efficient Word
The Universe produc'd: Stupendous Frame!
A thousand Suns *, a thousand Lights afford,
Which, with an innate Brightness, glorious
flame:

* 1022 fix'd Stars, which shine by their own Light, and
are as many Suns. *Rob. Phil.*

The

the A L M I G H T Y. 91

The Earth subsides, obedient to his Nod,
The lighter Elements aloft recede ;
All take the Station destin'd by their God,
And keep the Course OMNIPOTENCE
decreed.

The Raging Sea does its just Limits know,
Reveres the great CREATOR's dread Com-
mand ;
Thus far, no farther, do thou dare to flow ;
Here check th' impending Wave, and bare
again the Strand. †

Th' Effects amazing of thy forming Word,
Which, Creatures finite, can but partly
know,
For Meditation do a Field afford,
Too large for human Life to travel thro'.

Tho' to Discoveries of Ages past,
Our Search adds more, yet are we forc'd
to own
(Our Sense so bounded, and thy Works so vast)
We nothing know to what is yet unknown.*

Thy Works shew forth thy Wisdom, and thy
Pow'r,
Each Creature sets them in convincing
Light ;
Nor can the glorious Sun declare them more,
Than does the careful Ant, or humble Mite.

† Job xxxviii.

* Rake of Taste.

If from the Starry Host we turn our Eyes,
Whose mighty Distance † Numbers cannot
shew;

Or from the Planets which adorn the Skies,
We bend our Sight on Objects here below;
Successive Wonders strike upon the Eye,
All which thy Wisdom, all thy Goodness
speak;

Effects we see, the Causes hidden lie,
To fathom which Man's Intellect's too
weak.

When on thy Works inscrutable we think,
Which in each Particle the God declare,
Our Pride and Arrogance to nothing shrink;
For strait we learn how vile, how poor
we are.

This Knowledge of ourselves sets Reason right,
With Face confus'd our Nothingness we see;
Humbled in Dust, lost in a Flood of Light,
We own Perfection is alone in THEE. *

Did not thy own Commands, O Pow'r Divine,
Exact the Tribute of thy Creatures Love;
This Retribution, didst not thou injoin?
So vile we are, it wou'd Presumption prove. §

† A Sound emitted from *Sirius*, the nearest of the fix'd Stars, would be 500,000 Years before we could hear it, supposing the Sound in Proportion to the Distance. *Phil. Trans.*
A Bullet out of a Cannon, travelling with its utmost Swiftness from *Sirius* to the Earth, would take up 700,000 Years in its Journey. *Hugen's Conject.*

* *Job* xlii. § *Boyle's* Seraph. Love.

Thy

the ALMIGHTY. 93

Thy Goodness 'tis, which bids me dare to raise
My fault'ring Voice, and thy great Works
proclaim;

'Tis this emboldens me to sing thy Praise,
To bless and call upon thy Holy Name:

For what is Man, whom thou dost deign to
mind,

To whom Dominion o'er thy Works
thou'st giv'n?

What is the Son of Man, that he should find
Such vast Indulgence from the God of
Heav'n? *

Nothing but Vanity is mortal Man, †
Tho' fearfully, nay, wonderfully made;
His Life at most is measur'd by a Span;
And his Days pass, as does the fleeting Shade.

Like Grass he springeth up, which cloaths
the Fields, §

And with its Verdure entertains the Eye;
Or like the Flow'r, which fragrant Odour
yields,

Whose Morning Beauties in the Ev'ning die.

The Rising-Sun, whose genial Beams array'd
The painted Flow'rs of the enamel'd Mead,
Sees them, at Noon, cut down, and prostrate
laid,

With'ring, promiscuous, with the noxious
Weed:

* Eccles.

† Psal. cxliv, cxxxix, xxxix.

§ Psal. xc.

94 *An H Y M N to*

Succeeding Flow'rs strait spring, and take the
Place

Of those which fell beneath th' impartial
Scythe ;

And these now flourish in their native Grace,
Perfume the Air, and make the Earth look
blithe :

Not their gay Colours, nor their fragrant Smell,
The cruel Mower's rapid Hand can stay ;
These too must fall, as those before them fell,
And to another blooming Scene give way.

So, while the Earth remains a solid Mass,
On which revolving Years can take no hold,
New Generations rise, the old ones pass,
To Mem'ry lost, as is a Tale that's told. *

How vain is Man e'en in his Pomp of Pow'r !
How vain, how silly are his Pains and Care !
To Wealth amass'd he greedily adds more,
Yet knows not who the painful Gains shall
heir. †

Full fraught with Labour ev'ry thing is found,
There's nought on Earth the Mind can
satisfy :

Insatiable is the Ear of Sound, §
Of seeing more, still covetous the Eye :
Yet is there nothing new ; for all our Pain
Discovers only what before was known : ||
Things that have Ages in Oblivion lain,
We vainly style Inventions of our own.

* Eccles. i.
|| Eccles. ii. 10.

† Psal. xxxix. 6.

§ Eccles. i. 8.

the ALMIGHTY. 95

With vast Designs th' Imagination warm'd,
Does ev'ry Art and Stratagem employ ;*
And now the Work, the mighty Work's perform'd,

When, lo! a Fool does all the Fruit enjoy ;
Who insolently laughs at all our Care,
Reviles or scorns us for the Pains we've ta'en,
Thus do our Labours vanish into Air,
And all our Study, all our Toil proves vain.

This Thought alone, when all our Schemes
succeed,

Makes us unsatisfy'd with what is done ;
With Anguish we explore the finish'd Deed,
And count the painful Dangers we have run.

Thus, as each Like does its own Like beget,
So do our Pains, so does our carking Care,
So does our Anguish, so our Blood and Sweat
New Cares, new Anguish, and new Pains
prepare.

The Pleasures of this Life with Gall are mix'd,
The Search of Happiness on Earth is vain :
Wisdom and Happiness with THEE are fix'd,
With THEE alone, in THEE alone, remain.

Thou art the Source whence Happiness does
flow,

Who seeks it out of Thee does nothing gain ;
All other Happiness, that Mortals know,
Is not in Pleasure, but in Rest from Pain. †

* Eccles. ii. 19.

† Dryden.

96 *An H Y M N to, &c.*

Thy Mercy 'tis, which thus embitters Life,
To fix our Thoughts beyond the starry Skies,
That, wean'd from Earth, with Care and
Trouble rise—

We may to **THEE** in Contemplation rise.

So weak we are, we scarce with Pain perceive,
In this Decree Wisdom and Mercy join'd;
Led by false Hopes, to Earth we fondly cleave:
Shunning the Light, we wilfully are blind.

Man, who each Moment does thy Mercies
prove,
In whom some Rays of Wisdom seem to
dwell;
Who, warm'd by Gratitude, shou'd melt in
Love,
Of all thy Creatures only dares rebel.

So inconsistent are we with ourselves;
We vaunt a Light, which shews the Rocky
Coast;
Yet shut our Eyes, and run upon those Shelves
This Light reveals, and stubbornly are lost.

To Reason deaf, by Passions led astray,
Daily our Sins thy Justice do provoke;
But Mercy still prevails on **THEE** to stay,
And interposing, saves us from the Strok.

F I N I S.



The VANITY of MAN.

A

S E R M O N

Preached at

BISHOPS-CASTLE,

I N T H E

County of *SALOP*;

SUNDAY Afternoon, *May* the
24th, 1741.

B Y T H E

Rev. Mr. *RICHARD MASON*;
Gentleman Commoner of *Mag. Coll. Oxon.*

L O N D O N:

Printed in the Y E A R M,DCC,XLII.

P R I C E One Shilling.



W



ren
M
the
vo
wi
or
Pa
int

Ad
if v
are
fan
is
tha
We
Ta

PSALM viii. ver. 4.

What is Man that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of Man, that thou visitest him?



THE holy King and Prophet, contemplating the stupendous Majesty and Power of the great Creator, makes a natural Reflection on the ineffable Difference between God and his poor Creature Man; which Contemplation lays before him the wonderful Mercy of the Almighty, who vouchsafes to think of, and visit him either with his Blessings, to reward his Obedience; or with Inflictions, when deviated from the Paths of Righteousness, to bring him back into the right Way and prevent his perishing.

These Meditations make him break out into Admiration, *What is Man, &c?* And indeed, if we consider ourselves in a true Light, what are we but a Shadow? meer Vanity, as the same Prophet observes in another Place, *Man is like to Vanity: his Days are as a Shadow that passeth away.* Psal. cxliv. ver. 4. Again, *We bring our Years to an End, as it were a Tale that is told. The Days of our Age are*

4 *The VANITY of MAN.*

Three-score Years and ten, and though Men be so strong, that they come to Four-score Years, yet is their strength then but Labour and Sorrow; so soon passeth it away, and we are gone. Ps. xc. ver. 9, 10.

Thomas à Kempis, an excellent Divine, reflecting on the Miseries attendant on human Life, says, very justly, the Days of this Life are short and evil, full of Sorrow and Anguish, wherein Man is defiled with many Sins, encumber'd with many Passions, disquieted with many Cares, distracted with many Curiosities, entangled with many Vanities, encompassed about with many Errors, worn with many Labours, vexed with many Temptations, weakened with Pleasures, and tormented with Want.

The Ancients compared Man to Grass and the Flower of the Field, to a Bubble, a Puff of Wind, to Froth and to Chaff. Ἄνθρωπος ὡσεὶ χόρτος ἢ ἀνθος τὸ ἀγρὸν, πομπόλυξ ἀνὰ ἀέρος ἢ ἀχμῇ. — And can we say, when we reflect upon Eternity, that we are not as Grass or a Flower, which springs up and no sooner comes to Perfection, but is cut down or withers; as a Bubble of Water, which scarce appears but it breaks and vanishes; as a Puff of Wind, which is heard, passes and is forgot; as Froth, which falls almost as soon as raised; as Chaff which is carried away with the Wind, and is never more seen, or thought worth enquiring after.

What

The VANITY of MAN.

5

What is all the Pomp and Grandeur of this World, Conquests and Renown? a short Dream. What is Power? Weakness. What our Knowledge? Ignorance. What our Riches? Poverty. When we look to the eternal Cause of Causes, how contemptible must every thing we glory in appear! how despicable must we esteem ourselves! Did Mankind give into mature Reflection on what they are, how perishable; how soon forgot, it would put an End to their Ambition, and humble their Pride. How many have there been, who anxious to perpetuate their Names, have made their Lives miserable, yet are now entirely swallowed up in Oblivion? And those whose Names have survived many Ages, since their Departure hence, what Recompence is it for the Dangers they ran; the Care they were tormented with? Are they sensible that their Actions are mentioned with Honour to their Memory? No, the Grave separates us from the World, with which we have no longer Commerce: We are there ignorant of what passes among Men. But, suppose the contrary; the Soul, if happy, is above the Applause of momentary Mortals: if miserable, 'tis too much engrossed by Torments, to be anxious for, or, even, think of surviving Fame.

The Words of my Text naturally furnish the four following Heads for Reflection.

First,

6 *The VANITY of MAN.*

First, Whence we are ?

Secondly, Whither we go ?

Thirdly, What we are ?

Fourthly, What we shall be ?

First, Whence we are ? Man originally is from the Dust. *And the Lord God formed Man of the Dust of the Ground.* Gen. ch. ii. ver. 7. And as every thing is reducible to its first Principle, according to the Philosophers, so Man must again return to his, as God passed Sentence upon him. *In the Sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread, till thou return unto the Ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for Dust thou art, and unto Dust shalt thou return,* Gen. iii. ver. 19. *Job* also tells us in the 34th chap. ver. 15. *Man shall turn again unto Dust;* having an Eye to the Curse of God upon our Progenitor *Adam*. Thus much as to whence we are originally. Derivatively we are from Sinners. *Behold,* says holy *David,* *I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive me.* Ps. li. ver. 5. We exist by the absolute Will and incessant Protection of the Almighty, who formed us and breathing into the lifeless Dust it became a living Soul. Gen. ii. ver. 7. When we consider the Meanness of our Original, and the Sin in which we were born, which subjects us to be the Companions of accursed Spirits, and to be doomed to eternal Darkness and a living Death,

if

The VANITY of MAN. 7

if we are not regenerated, we shall become more humble; the high conceit of ourselves and the Contempt of others will be entirely extinguished, and we shall learn Resignation to God; Patience, Forbearance, Long-Suffering, and brotherly Love, with regard to Men.

When we are moved with Passion, when our Hearts are swoln with Pride, when our Minds are puffed up with a high Conceit of our own Perfections, when we glory in our Knowledge, when we are vain of our Beauty, when we despise others for their Ignorance or Deformity, when we harbour Revenge in our Breasts against our Neighbour, or dare, for any Losses, Disappointments, or even the severest Inflictions, murmur against and accuse Heaven of Severity: Let us look back to our Original; call to mind whence we sprang, and reflect that we shall very soon become a putrid and loathsome Corps, intolerable to those who shall survive us: And for that Reason be covered with Earth and return to our primitive Dust; and this Retrospection from whence we are, on the one Hand, and the Reflection on what we soon shall be on the other, will prove a Remedy for our Pride, Passions and Impatience. Let us, with *Job*, consider this seriously, and each Individual will say with him, *My Flesh is clothed with Worms and Clods of Dust.* *Job* vii. ver. 5. *All Flesh shall perish together, and Man shall turn again unto Dust.* *Job* xxxiv. ver. 15. *I have said to Corruption,*

8 *The VANITY of MAN.*

tion, Thou art my Father ; to the Worm, Thou art my Mother and my Sister. Job xvii. ver. 14. Such is the haughty Man, who proud of his Birth and elated with Titles, despises those who cannot reckon a Number of Ancestors, distinguished by high Posts and Dignities, or because such Objects of his Contempt are labouring under Wants, or are not equally wealthy. Let such an one look upon himself with an impartial Eye, and view his noble Extraction from the Dust of the Earth ; and then say in what he has Cause to glory ! We are all ; Rich and Poor, King and Beggar, of one and the same Composition. We are all shapen in Sin, conceived in Iniquity, and are all condemned by the same Sentence. Virtue alone, a good Life, and the conquest over ourselves, in subduing our irregular Passions, do or ought to make the only Distinction between Man and Man : Not that I impeach the Rewards of distinguished Virtue in Titles and Posts of Honour ; but as these are inherited, so ought they who derive them from their Ancestors, also to inherit the Virtues by which they were obtained : or these temporary Advantages only by setting such Men higher, expose their Vices more to View. Let me therefore advise the Great to shew they are not degenerated by Affability and Humanity ; the Rich, that they deserve the Wealth they possess by Liberality and Charity ; and let those who are in the highest Posts convince the World, they could not be more worthily filled
by

The VANITY of MAN. 9

by Justice, and a disinterested publick Spirit. In a Word, let us all bear in Mind to what End we have the Loan of Life; namely, that we may secure a blessed Eternity, and that we may act like rational Creatures, in securing this inestimable Good, let us often put this Question to ourselves, which is my

Second Head, Whither do we go?

The very Minute we came into the World we began our Journey to the Grave; we set out for the Goal of Death, to which we gradually draw near. Moments rise to Minutes; Minutes to Hours; Hours to Days; Days to Weeks; Weeks to Months; Months to Years: and every, the minuteſt, Particle of Time pushes us on, and advances us in our Journey. Every ſetting Sun reminds us we have a Day leſs to live, and that we alſo muſt decline and vaniſh from the Eyes of the World, never again to appear, never more to be reckoned in the Number of the Living: wherefore we ought to prepare, wiſely, for a future State; nay, even, he that doubts future Retributions, if he is endowed with Prudence, ought to live as if he had no Doubt, that he may not ſuffer by the Certainty: If there is no Hereafter, no future Reckoning, he can loſe nothing by having lived rationally; by which I mean, virtuously: But on the contrary, if there is, as all wiſe Men have acknowledged, even among the Heathens, a vicious

B

Courſe

10 *The VANITY of MAN.*

Course of Life makes his Death terrible, and his future Situation miserable. Whereas, he whose Hopes are fixed on a blessed Eternity, neither fears nor feels Death; which alone, in this World, is certain: Such a Man will make the Thoughts of his Dissolution easy to him, by looking beyond it on the Glory to which it leads; for as Life gives way to Death, so Death makes way for Life: If Death takes from us a momentary precarious Life, it amply rewards us by giving a Life immortal.

As we are borne away with the Tide of Time to the Valley of Death, where there is no repenting of Crimes or Follies past, which we can only do in our Passage through this World, and as after Death comes Judgment, it behoves us seriously and incessantly to think on whither we go, and to live so circumspectly as neither to be surpris'd at, or afraid of the great Change, when we shall put off Mortality and be cloathed with Immortality: at which Time, what will avail us all our past Pleasures, all worldly Pomp and Grandeur: Our Wealth and Power? Nothing: On the contrary, they will make our parting with them grievous, if our Hearts have been too much set upon them, they will be as so many Chains that bind our Affections to this World, which however the Power of Death will break in sunder. We shall be unwilling to be sequestred from them, and the irreversable De-

cree

The VANITY of MAN. II

cree will fill us with inconceivable Anguish and Bitterness of Soul. We shall think on the Use we have made of them with panick Fears, and apprehend the Account we are summoned to give at the Tribunal of a just and tremendous God: Whereas, he who daily thinks on whither he is going, whither he must inevitably go, will, in such a Manner, comport himself, as to look upon Death rather a friendly Deliverer than the King of Terrors, which, indeed, he is to the Wicked only: This prudent, whom I term the good Man, at his last Hour, may exclaim, *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory?* 1 Cor. ch. xv. ver. 55. Far from being terrified he will rejoice at it's Approach: His own Conscience will disarm this Leveller of all Mankind, take from him his Sting, and make this Servant of the Living God, triumph over the Grave.

We ought not to bewail our being mortal, but Sin which made us so. Man was at first created to be conditionally immortal: but Sin made him miserable: It was, therefore, Mercy made us mortal, *ne æternum essemus miseri*; that we might not be for ever miserable, as we must have been without Death.

To die is to be no more unhappy, if we have made a good Use of Life: it is but Breath departed from dead Earth, at first, enlivened by Breath breathed into it. The Philosophers among the Heathens ever e-

12 The VANITY of MAN.

steemed Death a desirable Good, as it was a Passage to a better Place. *Cato* the Senator said, *Si Deus mihi largiatur ut repuerascam valde recusem, nec tum me vixisse pœnitet quia bene vixi; nec timeo mori quia ex hospitio, non domo, discedam.* That if God would give him Power to renew his Youth, he should be very far from employing it, though neither should he be sorry that he had existed, because he was conscious he had lived well; neither was he afraid to die, as by Death he did not leave his House, but an Inn only. By which it is plain, this virtuous Heathen looked upon this Life no other than a Passage to a better, to which Death would give him Admittance. *Seneca* being asked *quid est mors?* What is Death? answered, *aut finis aut transitus.* Tis either a final End, or a Passage. But it is a Decree irrevocable, that all Flesh shall die: Wherefore let us constantly bear in Mind, that every Moment brings us nearer to the Execution of that Sentence; and that we shall *all*, sooner or later, take up our Rests in the Grave, whither we are journeying in Company; and let the Reflection of *whither we go* make us prepare for it, in such a Manner, that we may esteem the Moment which separates us from this World, the time of greatest Comfort, as it puts an End to the Miseries inseparable from this Vale of Tears; opens to us the Gates of immortal Life, and crowns us with endless Glory. It will greatly

con-

contribute to our leading Lives which will assure to us this blessed Futurity, if we incessantly and seriously consider my

Third Head, What we are ?

This Consideration will so manifestly set before us our own Nothingness, that we shall join the Holy Prophet in his Exclamation, *What is Man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the Son of Man that thou visitest him ?*

That we are endowed with a rational Soul; and capable of Immortality, is the only one Point in which we excel the brute Creation ; for as to the Body, many of them have the Advantage over us, we are weak crazy Beings; a Composition of Breath and Dust; subject to numberless Distempers; impure in the very Womb, condemned to Death before we were born ; naturally unclean in our Bodies ; vile in our Quality ; our Weight lighter than Vanity, and proud of Imperfection : Our Being is indeed no more than a troublesome Dream ; we are born weeping, live encompassed with Sorrows, and die grieving : This is a true Estimate of human Life. Notwithstanding we are endowed with Reason, yet are we so importuned by our Passions, that we act contrary to it, and may be shamed by Insects, which proceed more providently. We know that this World is not our resting Place, that we are here in a State of Probation ; that Time lost is irretrievable ; that we are posting
to

14 *The VANITY of MAN.*

to the Grave, which will keep us in Custody till it delivers us up to Judgment; that we shall at the last receive a Sentence according to the Lives we have led on Earth, and that such will be irrevocable; yet do we live, as if ignorant of all these infallible Truths; as if we imagined ourselves the Favourites of Heaven, and brought into the World only to indulge to our sensual Appetites: What miserable Wretches are we, who allured by present Enjoyments, can be unmoved with the Terrors of a dreadful Eternity, and seeing will not see? We are daily admonished by our inward Monitor; Conscience, incessantly calls upon, and lays before us our Danger; but, we rather endeavour to silence it's Clamours, than profit by it's Remonstrances, and one would judge that we were in love with Perdition.

Let us, my Beloved, as we are distinguished by Reason, act for the Time to come, like rational Creatures; consider the Frailty of our Nature; the many Casualties to which we are subject; the Certainty of Death; the Uncertainty of the time we shall die; what must necessarily follow on our leaving this World; rouse from this Lethargy of Sin and Folly, and awake to Prudence.

Would the haughty Man thus consider what he really is, what a momentary, poor, crazy, declining Creature; who depends entirely on the Mercies of his Creator for his longer Existence; it would allay all presumptuous

The VANITY of MAN. 15

tuous Thoughts, and make him look with another Eye on that Part of Mankind, his Kindred Dust, whom he now despises. What (as I have before observed) are Power, Riches, or Titles, but Accidents, of which we have only a permissive Fruition? One Man depends upon another, or upon a Number; and the greatest Prince, however securely his Dominion seems to be established, however just is his Title, however mild his Government, is liable to become as wretched as the most abject of his People, by unforeseen and innumerable Accidents. Of this Truth, we have Numbers of Examples in the Histories of all Nations.

From the greatest Monarch to the meanest Peasant, we are poor, uncertain, transitory Creatures, every Moment hastening to our first Principle, Dust: We carry about a perishable Body, which decays even by the Means of its Preservation, and will soon crumble into Atoms, like the Bodies of irrational Creatures. 'Tis then, that we shall reap the Benefit of the Distinction between them and us, if we have made a right Use of that distinguishing Faculty, Reason, given by the merciful and All-wise Creator, so to guide our Ways in this Journey of Life, as at the End to bring us to a blessed Immortality: But, if on the contrary, forgetful of what we are, we blindly follow the Dictates of our Passions, and inordinate Desires; Death will
bring

16 *The VANITY of MAN.*

bring us to such a Scene of everlasting Woe, that we shall envy the Beasts which perish with their Bodies, and wish we had rather been the most contemptible Reptile upon Earth, than the Victim of our Folly in endless Misery. I now proceed to my

Fourth and last Head, What we shall be?

As to our Bodies, they will, as I have already shewn, be immediately turn'd to Dust, the Principle of their Being. Though they will, mediately, be glorified; the Atoms of which they are form'd, will be again reunited and joined to the Soul, and be conducted by Angels to the Eternal Mansions of everlasting Bliss, if we are entitled to this unspeakable Mercy, by having squared our Lives to the Conditions of the Gospel-Covenant, on which alone the Great God has been pleased to promise it; but though our Bodies shall accompany our Souls to Heaven, they will then be divested of all Passions; and notwithstanding these identical Flesh, Blood and Bones, shall be received into the Celestial Choirs, as *Job* says, *And though after my Skin Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for my self, and mine Eyes shall behold, and not another; though my Reins be consumed within me.* *Job* xix. ver. 26, 27. Notwithstanding, I say, this very Body, which we now carry about with us, shall be received into Heaven, yet will it be
fo

The VANITY of MAN. 17

so purified, so changed in the twinkling of an Eye, as to be worthy of Admittance in those immaculate Realms of refulgent Light, endless Life, and ineffable Glory. For St. Paul; when he says in the 15th Chapter of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, That *Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*; explains himself, both in the subsequent Verses in this Chapter, and in *Philippians* Chapter iii. ver. 20, 21. By which he gives us to understand, that by *Flesh and Blood*, he means such as are our Bodies here on Earth, attended and polluted by our earthly Desires and irregular Passions. These are his Words,

“ Now this I say, Brethren, that *Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*; “ neither doth Corruption inherit Incorruption. Behold, I shew you a Mystery; we “ shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a Moment, in the twinkling of an “ Eye, at the last Trump, (for the Trumpet “ shall sound) and the Dead shall be raised incorruptible; and we shall be changed. For “ this corruptible must put on Incorruption, and “ this mortal must put on Immortality. 1 Cor. “ ch. xv. ver. 50, 51, 52, 53. For our Conversion is in Heaven, from whence also we “ look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: “ Who shall change our vile Body, that it may “ be fashioned like unto his glorious Body. *Philippians* chap. iii. ver. 20, 21.” And we learn by St. Matt. ch. xvii. ver. 2. that our
C blessed

18 *The VANITY of MAN.*

bleſſed Redeemer appeared as bright and glorious as the Sun, when he was tranſfigured: Our Bodies will therefore become lucid and environ'd with Glory, and tho' it is not here manifeſted to us what we ſhall be, yet may we be aſſured, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is. Our bleſſed Saviour himſelf ſpeaking of the laſt Judgment, ſays : *Then ſhall the Righteous ſhine forth as the Sun, in the Kingdom of their Father.* Mat. xiii. ver. 43. which was alſo propheſied by Daniel, *And many of them that ſleep in the Duſt of the Earth ſhall awake, ſome to everlaſting Life, and ſome to Shame and everlaſting Contempt. And they that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the Brightneſs of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteouſneſs, as the Stars for ever and ever.* Dan. xii. ver. 2, 3.

If any Perſon ſhould idly aſk, how theſe ſcattered Atoms diſperſed over the Face of the Earth, or this Body poſſibly devoured by Beaſts, Birds or Fiſh, ſhould reunite and be new formed? let him only contemplate on the Power of that God, who in the Beginning by his All-creating Word, framed the ſtupendous Fabrick of the Univerſe out of Nothing; his Aſtoniſhment will then naturally ceaſe, and he will ſay with the Apoſtle, *Why ſhould it be thought a Thing incredible with you, that God ſhould raiſe the Dead?* Acts ch. xxvi. ver. 8. It is that God from whom we are taught we ſhall riſe again, and
that

The VANITY of MAN. 19

that the Soul shall again be united to this identical Body, to which he will restore the Immortality it was deprived of by the Transgression of our first Parents: and as he is the God of Truth, Truth it self, his Word cannot fail us. This very Body shall be spiritualized, and together with the Soul enjoy eternal and unspeakable Bliss, join the Choir of Celestial Angels, in their Hymns of endless Praise of the glorious and infinitely Beneficent Creator, and follow the Lamb where-soever he goeth, which that we may all attain to, may God of his infinite Mercy assist us with his Divine Grace, through the Merits of his blessed Son our Redeemer Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost, be given all due Praise, Honour and Power, henceforth to all Eternity. *Amen.*——

F I N I S.

The Variety of Man.

...the soul shall be united to this
body, to which he will give the law
... it was deprived of by the Fall.
... of our first Parents: and he is the
... of Truth. Truth is all the Word and
... as. The very body shall be spirit-
... and together with the body shall be
... and unchangeable. Thus, in the Church
of Christian Angels, in their hymns of praise
of the glorious and infinitely hono-
rable Creator, and follow the Lamb where-
soever he goeth, which shall be the
very God of his infinite Majesty, with
his Divine Grace, through the merits of his
beloved Son our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who
came with the Father and the Spirit, to
redeem all who believe in him.



*The Resurrection proved from Reason
as well as Scripture.*

A
S E R M O N

Preached at

F A V E R S H A M,

I N T H E

County of *KENT*;

SUNDAY Afternoon *May* the 2d, 1742.

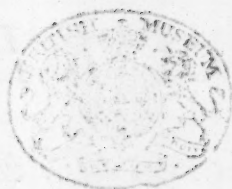
B Y T H E

Rev. Mr. *RICHARD MASON*;
Gentleman Commoner of *Mag. Coll. Oxon.*

L O N D O N:

Printed in the Y E A R M, DCC, XLII.

P R I C E One Shilling.



W



qu
and
Ce)
Inv
M
had
tho
Je
wh
hav
fon
ma
De
Fe/
cor
an
cate

A C T S xxvi. ver. 8.

Why should it be thought a Thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?



SAINT *Paul* having been falsely accused by the *Jews*, unable to prove the Charge they brought against him, and he having formerly been made acquainted with the Design they had to way-lay and murder him, before he was sent Prisoner to *Cesarea*; justly apprehending that the same Inveteracy which had bound upwards of forty Men under an Oath, to eat nothing till they had slain him, might perpetrate the Crime should he consent to go to, and be tried at, *Jerusalem*, obliged him to appeal to *Cæsar*; which Appeal, *Festus*, the *Roman* Governor, having admitted, determined to send him Prisoner to *Rome*. Soon after this King *Agrippa*, making a Visit to the Governor, from the Detail of *Paul's* Affair related to him by *Festus*, was desirous to hear him. *Paul* accordingly was brought before the King; gave an Account of himself, the Faith he was educated in, his former Zeal for the Religion of

4 *On the* RESURRECTION.

his own Nation ; his having persecuted the Sect of the *Nazarites*, his miraculous Conversion to the Name of Christ, and his being then a Prisoner for believing, as did all the Sect of the *Pharisees*, the Resurrection of the Dead : *A Promise, said he, made of God unto our Fathers. Unto which Promise our twelve Tribes instantly serving God Day and Night, hope to come : for which Hopes sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a Thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?* Acts ch. xxvi. ver. 6, 7, 8.

In this Speech of *St. Paul*, which begins with that Decency and Respect due to the high Dignity of king *Agrippa*, he frankly avows what was imputed to him as a Crime ; and brings the Promise and Power of God, for Arguments to support the Reasonableness of his Belief. What he advances, is plain, intelligible, energetick, and delivered with that Spirit and Resolution inseparable from an upright Conscience : Fear, Dejection, and servile Meanness, being both the Consequence and the Betrayers of Guilt. Nay, whoever will seriously weigh this Address of the Apostle, to *Agrippa, Festus*, and the mix'd Audience of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, will discover in it a Boldness, accompany'd with Modesty, and a Complaisance without the least Tincture of Flattery. In the Words of my Text, he appeals to the Faith of the *Jews*, and to the good

On the RESURRECTION. 5

good Sense of the *Gentiles*. *Why should it be thought a Thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?* with you Jews, who believe the Prophets, for they teach it ; with you Romans, who cultivate and are the great Patrons of Learning, since the Credibility of this Belief may be evinced from the Principles of sound Philosophy.

In discoursing on these Words, I shall endeavour to prove the Credibility of the Resurrection.

First, From the Old Testament.

Secondly, From a cursory View of Nature.

Thirdly, From the Power of God.

Fourthly and lastly, From the Testimony of the Gospel.

First, I am to prove the Credibility of the Resurrection from the Old Testament ; I shall to this End, suppose my self in the Place of the holy Apostle, speaking, first, to his Country Men the *Jews*, and next to the *Romans*. Why should it, O my Country Men, whose Hope and Trust is in the living God, whose Mercies you have often experienced ; who has often spoken to you by the Mouths of his Prophets ; whose Promises of Mercy on the one Hand, and Denunciation of Woes, if not averted by your turning away from, and repent-

6 On the RESURRECTION.

repenting your Wickedness, on the other, have never failed being verified : who know this eternal Being of all Beings to be the sacred Fountain of Truth : why should it, I say to you, who believe the Prophets, seem incredible, that God should raise the Dead ? have not the Prophets taught the Resurrection of the Dead ? or can you assign any Reason, wherefore the Prophets are less worthy of Credit, in this, than in any other Point ? you will not deny that the Resurrection of the Dead is a Doctrine of your own Prophets ; since you must either avow an Ignorance of what it behoves you, as true *Israelites*, to be well acquainted with ; or a Disingenuity which may with much Ease be detected. The Prophet *Daniel* expressly teaches it, *And many of them that sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall awake, some to everlasting Life, and some to Shame and everlasting Contempt.* Dan. xii. ver. 2. The holy and Royal Prophet *David*, says, *his Flesh shall rest in Hope : For thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell ; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see Corruption.* Psal. xvi. ver. 9, 10. I might quote other Texts, which manifest the Truth of this Doctrine, for the Profession of which, I am now a Prisoner and in Bonds ; but, that I may not seem prolix, I shall only add the Words of *Job*, spoken in the Anguish of his Soul, *For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter Day upon*

On the RESURRECTION. 7

upon the Earth. And though after my Skin, Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for my self, and mine Eyes shall behold, and not another; tho' my Reins be consumed within me. Job ch. xix. ver. 25, 26, 27. You may object that Job was no Prophet; I allow it; but we have Reason to believe that God has, by him, as well as by *Daniel*, and *David*, whom ye allow Prophets, declared what he designs to effect: Since among all the Nations of the Earth, who, by the Light of Nature, believe the Immortality of the Soul, none, who was not enlightened by the Spirit of God, had ever any the least Idea of the Resurrection of the Body, to share the Happiness or Misery of the Soul in a future State. Tho' I believe none of you will say the Prophets quoted, are not equally to be believed in this, and other Predictions, because it will be difficult to assign a Reason to support such a Position; yet as some of you may cavil at them, and say, from the Incredibility of the Resurrection of the Dead, that the Prophets spoke figuratively, and had a Sense different from the Interpretation I have given of their Words; as I know, my beloved Country-Men, that you believe the Scriptures, I will, from the Examples they afford us, shew that the Sense in which I have understood the Prophets, as it is agreeable to the Letter, is no Way absurd, or the Resurrection of the Dead, a Matter incredible; since

8 *On the* RESURRECTION.

since holy Writ affords us more than one Example of the Dead being raised again to Life. The Prophet *Elijah*, after having wrought a Wonder, altogether as incredible as restoring Life to the Dead, by the Barrel of Meal and Cruse of Oyl, supporting himself, the Widow of *Zarephath* and her Son, yet no way diminishing, raised the Son of that Widow, who died while he sojourned with her, and delivered him alive to his Mother. 1 *Kings* ch. xvii. ver. 16, 23. *Elisha* brought to Life the dead Son of the *Shunammite*. 2 *Kings* ch. iv. ver. 35. And the Power with which God had endued him in his Life did not leave him, but was efficacious even in his Sepulchre, when nothing of the Prophet remained but his Bones alone. *And Elisha died, and they buried him : And the Bands of the Moabites invaded the Land at the coming in of the Year. And it came to pass as they were burying a Man, that behold, they spied a Band of Men, and they cast the Man into the Sepulchre of Elisha : and when the Man was let down, and touched the Bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his Feet.* 2 *Kings* ch. xiii. ver. 20, 21. I will not ask you if you believe the holy Scriptures, I know you do. Why then, should you, (above all Men) think the Resurrection of the Dead a Thing incredible ; since your Belief of divine Writ, is an Argument that you allow this Miracle, (which at present can gain no Credit with you, and for

On the RERURRECTION. 9

for the Belief of which you have laden me with Chains ; fought to deprive me of Life, and arraign'd me at the Judgment Seat of *Cæsar*,) has been more than once wrought by the Power of God, delegated to his Servants, the Prophets. Is then the Hand of the Almighty shortened ? or is his Omnipotence no more, by suffering Restriction ? No. You dare not thus blaspheme. I am satisfied the *Romans* and others, who now hear me, not professing or knowing our Law, not acquainted with, or at least believing our Scripture, may esteem me a Babler ; a Teacher of strange Doctrines, and as the most noble *Festus* declared, a Mad-man ; though his Humanity was pleased to soften the Expression, by attributing a very unhappy Effect, to a very laudable Cause : but the *Romans*, in entertaining such an Opinion of me, for the Reasons already given, are excusable. But you, who have the Law of God and the Prophets for your Guides, what Excuse can you bring for the Treatment I have experienced from you ? These Bonds which you have put upon me are unjust ; or you no longer believe the Law and the Prophets : There is no Medium : but it is not to you that I am to give in my Plea ; you, and I, are subjects to *Cæsar* ; you may accuse, and it is an Indulgence allowed you, those who are Innovators : but, it is *Cæsar* who must determine. We are now Subjects of the *Romans*, your Power is restrained ; and I am sure, that ge-

B

nerous

10 *On the* RESURRECTION.

nerous, that brave and publick spirited People, will not condemn me, if I say, I am sorry to see, and heartily bewail the Liberty of my Country, depending on the Will of Others. I say it is not to you, but to *Cæsar*, that I am to clear my self, from the Accusation brought by you against me : Wherefore to remove the Prejudice, which the most noble *Festus* seems to have received, from my Doctrine, of my being disordered in my Senses, give me Leave most noble *Festus*, and you *Romans* to endeavour in the

Second Place, from a cursory View of a small Part of Nature, to shew the Credibility of the Resurrection of the Dead ; and that many things, of the Reality of which, we are convinced, would appear as incredible, did we not receive the Certainty of them, by the Conviction of our Senses. Let us suppose, O generous *Romans*, a Man by the Power of an Almighty Being, brought into the World, endow'd with the Use of Reason, but an entire Stranger to the Course of Nature ; and who had only been informed that every thing he saw hasten'd to its Dissolution ; that the genial Rays of that glorious Orb of Light, emitted a Warmth, which was productive of the Nourishment of Men and Beasts, and that without the Benefit of the Sun, the whole Creation of Animals, supposing they could support the Cold, which must

ne-

On the RESURRECTION. II

necessarily succeed to the Extinction of the Solar Warmth, must perish by want of Support : Suppose again, that this Man thus brought into the World, by Means supernatural, made his first Appearance when the Sun was in the Zenith ; that he observed it gradually decline to the West ; at length, to his thinking, submerge in the Ocean ; be lost to Sight, and thick Darkness succeed, which envelop'd, as he must necessarily suppose, the whole World : would not such a Man, as I have imagined, think, him who should assert that the very Globe of Light, which he saw buried in the Western Sea, would in the Revolution of a few Hours, which Term, we will suppose explain'd to him by an Hydrometer, rise again in the East, and again enliven the World with Light and Heat ? would not, I say, this fictitious Man, think him who should give him Assurance of this Resurrection of the Sun, an idle Babler ? Yet this Miracle, of the Sun's diurnal Death and Resurrection, we see without Emotion, and do not reflect upon it, as 'tis habitual to us. Thus too, the Grain which the Husbandman sows ; dies, rots in the Earth, and springs up again the same Grain ; be it Wheat, Barley, or any other Corn or Seed, that is sown, without engaging our Attention, as it is a thing we are accustomed to see ; yet is it not less miraculous, as it alone proceeds from the Will and Direction of infinite

B 2

Power,

Power, to whom all things are equally facile, than the Resurrection of the Body, when corrupted and turned to Dust. But this latter is not subject to the Senses; and it may be objected the Mind can form no Idea of what is not conveyed to it by the Canal of the Senses: I answer, that the Senses are as little informed, with Regard to the perishing and new Vegetation of the Corn sown, as it is of the Resurrection of human Bodies, and acquainted only with the Effects; again, that it is an Error to maintain, that the Mind can form no Idea but by Means of the Senses. You *Romans* believe the Immortality of the Soul and future Retributions; and if I should ask you what the Soul is, which you believe exists, when separated from the Body, you would tell me, and very rightly, that it is an immaterial Principle, distinct from the Body, and the Cause of the several Operations, of which, by inward Sense and Experience we are self conscious; it is the Source of Thought and Memory, and is, what Reasons, Debates, directs the Will and all the Motions of the Body: That it is distinct from the Body, is hence evident; we know that the Body is material, and 'tis impossible that Matter however refined and depurated, can be capable of Thought and Memory, the Properties of the Soul. Will any one deny this, being a just Idea of the Soul? Certainly no. Will any one say you have received this Idea by Means of the Senses? This cannot be
sup-

supported ; whence it is evident, that we may conceive many things without their Interposition, and that we should reject a Number of Truths, if we admitted nothing but what can be accounted for to human Reason ; which however we allow possible, through the Conviction of our Senses ; though from their being out of the ordinary Course of Nature, they would otherwise seem as incredible, as the Resurrection of the Dead. Who can account for the Disappointment of a pregnant Woman's Inclination, or a Fright, impressing on the *Fætus* in her Womb, the Figure of the thing she craved, or by which she was frighten'd, or producing a Monster ? Can human Reason fathom this Mystery, or could we have any Idea of such an Effect being possible ? would it not be altogether as incredible as the Resurrection of our Bodies after their Dissolution, now appears to you, did not the Frequency of such an Effect, make us less reflect upon the Miracle ; for such I term whatever is out of the common Road of the Operation of Nature ? Which of your Philosophers can give a Reason for the instantaneous Obedience of the Members of the Body to the Will ? or how the different Aliments we take, are converted to Flesh and Blood, of the same Species as that we brought into the World ? Yet we are convinced of these Truths : whatever our Thoughts direct our Members instantly obey. Would I walk, my

†

Legs

14 *On the* RESURRECTION.

Legs are that Moment in Motion ; would I stop and stand still, they as instantaneously cease that Motion ; do we feed on Herbs, or Pulse, Fish, or Flesh, drink Wine or Water ; or are nourished by an indiscriminate Use of these different Aliments, which are endued respectively with different Virtues and Effects ; yet we are convinced, they all concur to one End, and are converted into the same Substance ; and the same colour'd Liquid, Flesh and Blood. But, as I said, the Wonder of these Effects is lost in their being habitual to us. Can any of us account for Digestion and Separation, how Nature divides the nutritive from the superfluous Part of our Food, which she casts forth, and how she prepares, colours, and disposes that which she retains, and converts to Flesh and Blood ?

If then those things which pass within us, and those which we are the best acquainted with, are beyond the fathoming of our Reason, ought it not to humble the high Conceit we entertain of the Strength of our own Penetration, and make us acknowledge that there possibly may be Effects, as real as those we are convinced of, though we cannot comprehend their Feasibility ; and not dogmatically reject them as incredible, from their being placed beyond the Extent of our Reason ? Was a Man born under a warm Climate to be told, that by the Effects of sharp Winds in the Time of the Sun's greatest Distance from
some

some Countries situated in the Northern Part of the World, Water is condensed into a solid Body, and large Rivers become firm Plains and bear Beasts and Carriages, which travel over them with as great Security as upon the Earth; would not the Southern Inhabitant, think this Truth as idle a Fable and altogether as incredible as the Resurrection of the Dead, and have as little Idea of a Fluid being consolidated, and brought to a compact Body, as you have of the Re-union of the Particles of this human Body, after they have been separated from each other, and dispersed to different Parts by Winds or other Causes? Who among us can give a Definition of the Winds, what is their Nature; what their Power; why sometimes raging with such Violence as to strike a Terror in the bravest; at other times, gentle and refreshing? Can any describe their Form, or measure their Strength, or say, where is the Place of their Retreat and Abode, when they are no longer felt by us, or whether they are ever in Agitation, and withdraw from one Part of the World, to wanton or range in another; what it is excites their Fury or qualifies their Violence? Who can tell us the Cause of their being sometimes corrupted, and spreading pestilential Infection; why at certain Seasons of the Year, they shall blow either with more Fury, or towards some particular Quarter for a stated Time? But these things are as much
hid

16 *On the* RESURRECTION.

hid from human Knowledge to account for, as is the Resurrection of the Dead ; and therefore to be attributed to the Direction and Power alone of that supreme Being who made and governs the Universe.

Having thus far, in personating the holy Apostle, gone through the two first Heads of my Discourse, and shewn the Credibility of the Resurrection of our Bodies ; First, from the Old Testament ; Secondly, from a cursory View of some Part of Nature : I shall now descend by re-assuming my own humble Character of an unworthy Preacher to a Congregation of, I hope, faithful and pious Christians, and proceed to my

Third Head, to prove the Credibility of this Doctrine from the Power of God.

That there is such a supreme Being as is infinite in all his Attributes is evinced by this one plain and undeniable Position ; that we and every Thing existing, must have received our and its Being from some other Cause, endued with superior Power, as it is most certain we could not make ourselves or them ; and we must necessarily go back till we fix on a Power which must exist from all Eternity ; since, no Being which owes its Existence to another Existence can be the Supreme : this great and supreme Being of all others, cannot but be of infinite Power and infinite Wisdom, as all his Works declare ; and
it

On the RESURRECTION. 17

it is this omnipotent eternal Spirit, the Object of our Praise and Adoration, we call God. I shall not lose Time to refute the most absurd Doctrine of eternal Atoms and eternal Changes of Forms; or use farther Arguments to prove the Being of a tremendous God; since, from my Soul, I sincerely believe, there is not in Nature, such a stupid Wretch as a real Atheist; though, there may be Men, who, from a Vanity of appearing Particular; of a superior Strength of Judgment and Spirit to others, will foolishly dare to deny the Existence of a God, with their Lips, while they tremble at the Apprehension of his Power and Justice in the inward Recesses of their Hearts: I shall therefore proceed to prove the Credibility of our Bodies being raised again after Death, and being again united with our Souls jointly to enjoy the Rewards, which the Mercy of God has vouchsafed to promise, through the Merits of Christ, to the Obedient, or to suffer the Punishment which his Justice will inflict on the Wicked.

As, I say, I am to prove this from the Power of God, I am under a Necessity of reminding you of that Power; and to form an Idea of this, tho' no way adequate to it, as the Faculties of our Minds are limited; we need but cast our Eyes up to Heaven, and down again upon Earth, and reflect that their and our Existence, is the Effect of his Power who will'd, and behold the Heavens, the

C

Earth

18 *On the* RESURRECTION.

Earth and all therein contained, were formed and produced from Nothing. And if he pleased to will, that a thousand other Worlds, a thousand times bigger, a thousand times more beautiful, should instantly exist, it is certain they would as instantly be formed. If none can deny this Power to Infinity, where is the Difficulty to believe, that the separated and scattered Atoms which now compacted make this Body, should, at his Will, be again gathered together, brought into the same Form, and again be united to the Soul ? If we believe the Scriptures, in the Account they give us of the Creation of the first Man, mediately out of Nothing, the Earth being the Production of the All-powerful Will of God, and Man formed out of it's Dust, tho' God breathing into his Nostrils the Breath of Life, made him a living Soul ; if we believe this, and there could be Degrees in Infinity, which our shallow Reason informs us there cannot ; far from thinking the Resurrection of the Body a thing incredible, we should esteem it more easy to be performed, than was the Creation of *Adam* from the Dust, and of *Eve* from a single Rib of that first Man : But, we need not use other Arguments to prove the *Credibility of the Doctrine of the Resurrection*, than this one ; God is Omnipotent, whatever he wills is instantaneously performed, and all things are equally easy to the Almighty. Wherefore I shall go on to my

Fourth

N.
ormed
if he
orlds,
times
it is
l. If
ere is
l and
ake
ered
d a-
the
the
No-
the
ned
his
li-
uld
ow
om
ing
to
am
lib
se
of
his
lls
gs
re
th

On the RESURRECTION. 19

Fourth and last Head, to prove the *Credibility of the Resurrection of our Bodies*, from the Testimony of the Gospel.

Our blessed Redeemer, while he was yet on Earth, foretold his Resurrection, as we are taught in the Gospel of St. *John*, *ch. 2. v. 19.* when he gives an Account of Christ's clearing the Temple of such as made it a Place of Traffick; for the *Jews* asking of him a Sign, by which, they might know him authorized to do these things; he gave them that of his Resurrection, as an infallible Proof of his divine Commission. *Jesus answered and said unto them, destroy this Temple, (meaning his Body) and in three Days I will raise it up.* in St. *Mat. ch. xxii. v. 31, 32.* We also learn, that our Lord taught and proved the Resurrection by his Argument to the *Saduces*, who put a Question to him, and received in Answer, *But as touching the Resurrection of the Dead, have ye not read, that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the Dead, but of the Living.* When he was at an Entertainment, of one of the chief *Pharisees*, he advises him to rather Charity than Hospitality; and to induce him to the Exercise of that Virtue, tells him, *he shall be recompensed at the Resurrection.* *Luke ch. xiv. v. 14. Mar-*

20 On the RESURRECTION.

tha speaking of her Brother's Death, when our Saviour answered, that her Brother should rise again; shews her steady Belief of the Resurrection, in these Words, *I know that he shall rise again in the Resurrection at the last Day.* — Jesus said unto her, *I am the Resurrection and the Life: He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* St. John ch. xi. v. 24, 25.

The *Jews*, who were acquainted with our Redeemer's having spoken of his own Resurrection in three Days after his Death, to prevent any Fraud, as they apprehended, took effectual Methods to put the Certainty of his Resurrection beyond all Possibility of Doubt; for, *the Chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, We remember that, that Deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three Days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the Sepulchre be made sure until the third Day, lest his Disciples come by Night and steal him away, and say unto the People he is risen from the Dead: so the last Error shall be worse than the first.* Pilate said unto them, *ye have a Watch, go your way, make it as sure as you can.* So they went and made the Sepulchre sure, sealing the Stone, and setting a Watch. Matt. ch. xxvii. v. 62, 63, 64, 65, 66. Afterwards, the Women who had prepared Spices for his dead Body going to the Sepulchre, was informed of his Resurrection, by the Testimony of Angels, *Why*
seek

On the RESURRECTION. 21

seek ye the Living among the Dead? He is not here, but is risen. Luke ch. xxiv. v. 5, 6. The Day of his Resurrection he was seen by, and conversed with two of his Disciples going to *Emaus*. After that, by above five hundred Brethren, as Saint Paul writes in the 1 Cor. ch. xv. v. 3, 4, 5.—*For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our Sins according to the Scriptures: and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third Day according to the Scriptures, and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve, after that, he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once: After that, he was seen of James: then of all the Apostles, and last of all he was seen of me also.*

Was I to bring all the Texts of the Gospel, which evidence the Resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, and teach this Doctrine as a Point of Faith essential to our Salvation, I should detain you too long; wherefore for that Reason, and my supposing that there is none here unacquainted with the Scriptures, I esteem those I have now quoted, sufficient to prove, not only the Credibility of the Resurrection of our Saviour, but the Certainty that he did, and at his Second coming we shall rise all again from the Dead, and shall give Account for our own Works. In the Words of St. John, *They that have done Good unto the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil unto the Resurrection of Damnation.* John ch. v. v. 29.

There

7

22 *On the* RESURRECTION.

There are, as I have said, many other Instances in the New Testament to induce this Belief of the Resurrection. Our Saviour having raised the dead Son of the Widow of *Nain*, the Daughter of the Ruler of the Synagogue. *Mark c. v. v. 41.* and his Friend *Lazarus*. *St. John ch. xi. v. 44.* But, my Beloved, little will this Belief avail us at the last Day, when the Grave shall give up its Deposit, and the Sea deliver back it's Dead, awakened to Life, and called to Judgment, by the Sound of the last Trumpet, if we do not prepare ourselves before Hand, to awake to a joyful Eternity, by obeying, as well as believing the Doctrine of our merciful and great Master, dying to Sin, rising again to Righteousness; that we may be joyfully received by the glorious Host of Angels, conducted by them, exulting, with well grounded Hopes, arising from a Consciousness of having done our Duty, to the Judgment Seat, to receive the Reward of everlasting Glory, as of the infinitely happy Number of those, to whom our blessed Lord and Redeemer shall say, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom, prepared for you from the Foundation of the World;* to which, that we may through his Merits be admitted, God of his infinite Mercy grant; to whom, with the Son and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honour and Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.



n-
ef
ed
h-
v.
v.
ail
up
d,
oy
ot
to
e-
at
e-
d
y
s,
e
re
e
n
y,
be
y-
y
is
n
d

2

H

S

*The mutual Advantages of Subor-
dination.*

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the
Honourable SOCIETY
O F

G R A Y's-I N N:
SUNDAY *March* 16th, 1739-40.

B Y T H E
Rev. Mr. *RICHARD MASON*;
Gentleman Commoner of *Mag. Coll. Oxon.*

L O N D O N:
Printed in the Y E A R M, DCCXLII.



PROV. XX. *ver.* 2.

*The Rich and Poor meet together, the
Lord is the Maker of them all.*



AS the natural Body is composed of different Members and Parts; which have distinct and subordinate Functions; yet all co-operate for the Support of the Whole; the Feet not refusing to bear the Weight of the Body, the Hands and Arms being ready to work for its Aliment, the Head to direct, the Mouth to receive, and the Stomach to digest the Food, provided by the Contrivance of one Part and Labour of the others: So in the Political Body; there is a providential Subordination, without which, Confusion would quickly put an End to all Society, and Men, like Beasts of Prey, devour one another: Whereas, by this Subordination, the strong and merciless are restrained, the weak and patient protected, Justice done on the Oppressors, and the Injured righted.

And as in the natural Body, the Feet cannot say to the Head, *We want thee not, or the Head reject the Assistance of the Feet*, 1 Cor. ch: xii. So, in the political Body, the Poor stand in need of the Rich, and the Rich cannot do without the Poor. Thus the Rich and Poor meet together

for mutual Assistance. Each of these Classes of Men, have their particular Advantages. Riches afford an Opportunity of feeling the most exquisite Pleasure this Life can afford, which is rather to be experienced than described ; and also, to purchase an eternal Happiness in the Life to come, by relieving the Wants and Miseries of our less happy Brethren : while on the other Hand, Poverty teaches us Humility and Patience, and thus in this World affords the Satisfaction of a contented Mind, and will secure us never failing Treasures in the next ; the Reward of our Resignation to the Will of our great Creator.

In discoursing on my Text I shall observe,

First, what is to be understood by *the Rich and Poor meet together*.

Secondly, In what Sense *Solomon* here says, *The Lord is the Maker of them all*.

First, they may be said to meet together ; that is, no Difference is found between them in their Birth, their Form, their Support, or Dissolution. The Rich and Poor have the same Entrance into the World, differ nothing in their Make, have need of the same Nourishment to preserve Life, and are alike mortal. Death levels both, and puts an End to Distinction ; the Respect shewn the Rich, and the Contempt experienced by the Poor cease, when once they have entered the gloomy silent Mansions of that King of Terrors, who, without regard to Persons, leads to the Judgment Seat

Seat of a tremendous God ; where they may again be said to meet together, that is, where they are upon the same Level ; where the same Sentence will be passed upon the wicked rich Man, and prophane Beggar ; and the same Reward crown the Virtues of the charitable Rich, who has rightly employed the Wealth, with which he had been entrusted, and proved himself a good Steward ; and reward the patient wanting Man, who in his Distress, looked up to God, humbly submitted to the Inflictions he was pleased to bring upon him, and chearfully resign'd, because he knew they were from the Hand of his Creator.

The Rich and Poor may again be said to meet together, as they participate alike in the Sin of our first Parents. They are equally descended from them, equally guilty before God, equally born in Sin, and shapen in Iniquity : On the other Hand, they alike participate in the Death of Christ ; He is the Mediator for the Poor as well as the Rich, and his Covenant of Promises are equally made to both.

That the Wise Man spake it in this Sense, and not in regard to worldly Advantages, is, I think, evident from the Distinction he makes between them, with regard to the things of this Life, in the Seventh Verse of the same Chapter. *The Rich ruleth over the Poor, and the Borrower is the Servant to the Lender.* Here we may carry this Reflection farther. The Poor, as they depend on the Rich for their Support, must consequently be submissive to them : Experience
shews

shews, that whoever has his Dependance on another, is so much subject to him, as to bear the unevenness of his Temper ; be silent when he storms, court his Smiles, dissemble Injuries done by him, receive and execute his Orders, which the poor Man must stile Commands, and have neither Eyes, Ears, nor Tongue, to see, hear, or divulge what may incur his Displeasure : To go on to more Particulars ; some haughty rich Men expect to have even their Vices flatter'd ; and I fear there are but too many whose Wants make them sacrifice their Veracity to their Interest, and meanly offer up Incense to the Wealthy. If any can be allow'd to plead excuse for this, it must be the Men who are perishing : Tho' even such, shew a Distrust of Providence, when they fly to Vice to relieve their Necessities : But how can *They* palliate their Meanness, who, through Luxury, bring themselves from Affluence to a Dependance on the Great ; and to live riotously, will fawn upon their Vices, be the Ministers of them, and sacrifice the Honour even of their Families, with this View only, that, they may be able to be superlatively wicked themselves ! The other Distinction which *Solomon* makes between the Rich and Poor, is that *the Borrower is the Servant of the Lender*. Here we find Dominion arise from Wealth : though a Man is not absolutely poor, yet, if he is obliged to borrow, the Lender immediately looks upon himself his Superior, and makes him sensible he is so, by exerting the Power given him by the necessities of the Debtor, who must
entreat

entreat, and too often to the Ruin of Debtors and their Families, purchase his Forbearance by submitting to shameful Extortions. *England* is a Land of Liberty, with regard to common Society in general; but I believe no Country inhabited by Professors of the Name of Christ verifies more this Observation of the Wise Man, with regard to private Life: Since the Tyranny of Creditors and Inhumanity of Jailors, have often obliged the Legislative Power to step in, and by its Authority restrain the raging Cruelty of both the One and the Other.

So great a Misfortune is it to be in Debt, that in the Enumeration of the Blessings which are promised to attend the Obedience of the Israelites; that they shall not become Debtors is mentioned as One. *The Lord shall open unto thee his good Treasure, The Heaven to give the Rain unto thy Land in his Season, and to bless all the Work of thine Hand: And thou shalt lend unto many Nations, and thou shalt not borrow,* Deuteronomy xxviii. ver. 12.

From what has been advanced I think it is obvious that *Solomon*, in saying the Rich and Poor meet together, cannot be taken to have Respect to things of this World, since he has shewn the Inequality between them; but that they meet together as they are all the Work of God's Hands, subject to the same Vissitudes, and must alike return to their mother Earth. *The Lord is the Maker of them all*, which is my

Second

Second Head. Wherefore let us examine what is couched under these Words, and

First, I apprehend that he intends by them to remind us, that we owe our Being to God's Free Grace, thereby to awaken us to a Contemplation of his Infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness; at the same time to Thankfulness for our Existence, Support, and Preservation; to place our Trust in his Mercy, which we daily experience, and to invoke and adore him, who is the Author of all Good.

Secondly, These Words imply, an Admonition to both the Rich and Poor, by a Reflection, that they are both the Creatures of his Hand; and as the Rich ought not to be puffed up with his Affluence and forget God, consequently omit making a right Use of the worldly Advantage with which the Almighty has bless'd him; but remember that all he possesses is from his liberal Hand, is his spontaneous Gift, which he may deprive him of when ever he shall please: So ought not the Poor to repine at his Lot, but by calling to Mind that it is decreed by Omniscience himself, humbly acknowledge, that his God knows better than he what is best for him, and chearfully resign to his Disposition, in whose Hand it is to humble Princes, and to raise the most wretched of Mankind to the highest Dignities. *He raiseth up the Poor out of the Dust, and lifteth up the Beggar from the Dungbill, to set them among Princes, and to make them inherit the Throne of Glory.* 1 Sam. ch. ii. ver. 7, 8.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, *The Lord is the Maker of them all*, contains an Exhortation to the Rich, to have Mercy on his wanting Brethren : And to the Poor, not to envy the Affluence or Superiority of those, whom it hath pleased God to bless with a more happy Lot in this Life ; because it is the Will of the great Creator, in whose Hands we are, who as he has made us, has an incontestable Right to dispose of us, as he shall, in his infinite Wisdom, think fit. Let the Rich remember ; that the Poor have the Honour, as well as they, to be the Workmanship of God ; and for that Reason, were there no other, let them not despise them : Nay, it is their Interest to have a Regard for the Poor, since their Neglect of them is a Sin ; but on the contrary, their considering them as they ought, is attended with a Blessing. *He that despiseth his Neighbour sinneth ; but he that hath Mercy on the Poor, happy is he.* Prov. xiv. ver. 21. How great that Sin is we are told in the 31st Verse of the same Chapter. *He that oppresseth the Poor, reproacheth his Maker : but he that honoureth him, hath Mercy on the Poor.* Let him who abounds, remember that his Affluence proceeds from God's Bounty, in whose Power it is to deprive him of his Riches, if he does not make that Use of it, as is commanded in Holy Writ. *If thy Brother be waxen poor, and fallen in Decay with thee ; then thou shalt relieve him : yea, though he be a Stranger or a Sojourner ; that he may live with*

The mutual Advantages

thee. Levit. xxv. ver. 35. If there be with you a poor Man, thou shalt not harden thine Heart, nor shut thine Hand from thy poor Brother : But thou shalt open thine Hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his Need, in that which he wanteth. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine Heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him : because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy Works, and in all that thou puttest thine Hand unto. Deut. xv. ver. 7, 8, 10. Here we see, to encourage us to the Performance of this Duty, a temporal Advantage is promised to attend it ; Prosperity in all our Works and Undertakings. Many other Texts of Scripture may be brought that enjoin us to make this right Use of an affluent Fortune, which will prove a Blessing or a Curse, as we perform or neglect our Duty. *Blessed is he that considereth the Poor ; the Lord will deliver him in Time of Trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the Earth ; and thou wilt not deliver him into the Will of his Enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the Bed of Languishing : Thou wilt make all his Bed in his Sicknes. Psal. xli. ver. 1, 2, 3.* And St. Peter advises us to have fervent Charity above all things ; for, or because it is attended by the most desirable Blessing, to wit, *It shall cover the multitude of Sins.* 1 Pet. iv. ver. 8. but the Negligence of this Duty of Charity to the Poor ; or too great an Esteem of Riches, which

which we find in *Timothy* term'd *The Root of all Evil*. 1 Tim. vi. ver. 10. is the certain Loss of the Soul, since our Saviour tells us, *It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. Mark x. ver. 25. which cannot be understood, but of such as make a wrong Use of their Wealth, either by hoarding it up, and, in a Manner, paying Adoration to their Gold; or in throwing away profusely in Wantonness and Luxury, what they ought to have employ'd for the Relief of their Poor Brethren. (Here I may observe by the Bye) that if we read the *Greek Word* κέρμυλος with *iota* for κέρμυλος with *eta*, it signifies a Cable; and as that may be untwisted and brought to Threads small enough to pass the Whole, through the Eye of a Needle: so may the rich Man by dividing his superfluous Wealth among the Poor, be able to pass that *strait Gate*, and keep in that *narrow Way* which leadeth unto Life; where he shall find his corruptible Treasures repaid him with incorruptible ones. But,

It is time to return from this Digression: Wherefore I repeat, let the Rich consider, that the Almighty may, whenever he pleases, resume his Gifts, and reduce him to want that compassionate Relief, which he has perhaps denied to his perishing Brother. The Vicissitudes of this World are so many, one would think they are sufficient to wean a Man from the Love of Riches, and engage him to make them

subservient to his eternal Happiness, by lending them to the Lord. For, *He that hath Pity upon the Poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given, will he pay him again.* Prov. xix. ver. 17. This is a way to secure them upon a good Fund, which no Revolution of Government, no Devises of crafty and ill designing Men can ever shake: This is insuring them against Thieves, Fire, Shipwrecks, and all other Accidents to which they are liable, and which we daily see happen and bring the Wealthiest to even pinching Want. For *The Lord maketh Poor and maketh Rich: He bringeth low and lifteth up.* 1 Sam. ii. ver. 7. All things are by his Will, or Sufferance. This is rightly employing the Talents entrusted to the rich Man's Care, putting them out to an Interest, which will much more than double the Principle, and gain him this Approbation of his Master, *Well done thou good and faithful Servant thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee Ruler over many Things, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* Matt. xxv. ver. 21. I have said, that

Thirdly, *The Lord is the Maker of them all*, is an Exhortation to the Rich to have mercy on the Poor, on which I need no farther expatiate: and also to the Poor not to be envious against the Rich, on which I shall observe, that

First, It is impeaching the Wisdom of God, and taking upon us to direct Omniscience.

Secondly,

Secondly, It is Foolish, nay highly so.

Thirdly, That this Folly is more likely to encrease, than to relieve our Miseries.

That envy proceeds from a partial Comparison both of Circumstances and Merit, of the Envious Person with him whom he makes the Object of his Displeasure, will, I believe, be easily granted. We should envy none the advantage he has over us in Birth, Wealth, or Dignities; did we really believe, were we thoroughly convinced that he was more deserving of his Rank or Affluence than are ourselves; but on the contrary, we should rejoice in his good Fortune. Now certainly this impeaching the Omniscience of God as if we knew better how to order the Affairs of this World than he who made it, is, in our Hearts accusing him, either of want of Judgment or of Partiality, which, is want of Justice; and arrogantly taking upon us to say we could have made a better, a more equal Disposition than he has done. Who among us, would not tremble to hear such Blasphemous Presumption utter'd! tho' perhaps, few can lay their Hands on their Hearts and say, they have never been guilty, they never envy'd the Prosperity of their Neighbours, or, thro' hatred depreciated their Characters, to make them appear in the Eyes of the World, unworthy of their good Fortune; but I am willing to hope, such as have thus err'd, did it, for want of considering the blackness of the Crime.

Secondly, Envy and Repining is greatly foolish

foolish : It hurts only the Envious Person, who, by it, exposes himself to the resentment of one more Powerful than himself, (I mean the Rich Man,) and who, if he does not revenge it, condemns us of spite and injustice, and raises his own Character on the Ruin of ours by his Moderation : But should he have a Spirit of revenge equal to our Malevolence ; how foolish must our procedure be to irritate the Person, who we know can make us suffer, if not entirely crush us for our Malice ! but, have we any certainty that we may not one Day stand in need of the Favour or Protection of the envy'd Man ? And supposing he is above relenting our Inveteracy, with what Face can we ask his Service or Interest ? should we not be conscious that we merited (from him) rather Enmity than Friendship, Slights than Favour, and Contempt than Protection : Nay, should we not give the Lye to our own Calumnies by asking him to serve us, and tacitly own we think him a Man of Virtue, who can be capable not only to forgive the Injury, but even assist the Injurer ?

Thirdly, This Folly is more likely to encrease, than to relieve our Miseries.

Had a Man a Post allotted him by an Earthly Despotick Prince ; Dishonourable, Laborious, and so little Advantageous, that he must be extremely Parsimonious to give Bread to his Family ; and yet from the Absoluteness of his Prince he could not refuse accepting it, though never so averse from his Inclinations, and

con-

contrary to his Interest; would he, in hopes of being raised to one more lucrative, which required less Care and Fatigue, fly in the Face of his Prince and tell him, that he wanted both Prudence and Justice in the Disposition he had made? Could he imagine, supposing such a Man to have common Sense, that this Procedure was not more likely to bring the Indignation of his Prince upon him than conciliate his Favour? If then in such a situation we should accuse this Man of Folly; if we can condemn wrong Steps taken in Worldly Affairs, let us use at least, as much Prudence in those which are Spiritual; and be as wise for an Eternal, as we are for a Temporal Interest: we know we are in the Hands of God, as Clay in the Potters. *Hath not the Potter power over the Clay, of the same Lump to make one Vessel unto Honour and another unto Dishonour?* Rom. ix. ver. 21. Will murmurings and repinings against the Will of our Creator, mend our Condition; will accusing his Providence as all tacitly do, who set not down contented with their Lot, prove a Remedy; will it alleviate the Burthen he complains of, or will it not rather add still a greater weight to what he already groans under? Surely it will; and we may be convinced of it, if we have Faith in the Sacred Writings, *Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker*: Isa. xlv. ver. 9. Wherefore, let every one who is oppressed with Want, or who labours under Difficulties avoid this Woe pronounced by the Prophet, by humbly sub-

+

mitting

mitting to the will of Providence. And if he has at any Time, by his Impatience, dar'd to expostulate with his Maker, let him *sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto him.* St. John cap. v. ver. 14.

To conclude with the words of my Text, *let the Rich and Poor meet together*, let them be upon a level in acts of Benovelence on the one Hand; of Service and Good-will on the other: Let the Charity of the Rich relieve the wants of the Poor; and the Prayers, and Gratitude of the Poor, repay the Obligation: Let the Master command with Reason and Mildness; the Hierling perform his Task with Justice and Chearfulness; let them remember that *The Lord is the Maker of them all*; and from that Consideration let not the Rich be arrogant and despise the Poor, or the Poor repine and envy the Rich; but the one, making a right Use of his Affluence, and the other of his Wants; purchase to themselves an eternal Happiness, and thus by the Practice of Charity, Resignation and Brotherly Love; meet together in the blessed Regions of never ending Happiness. Which, that we may all arrive at, may God of his Infinite Mercy grant, thro' the Merits of his blessed Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour, to whom with the Holy Ghost, three Persons, one God, be ascribed all Honour, Glory and Power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.



The Benefits of CONTENTMENT.

A
SERMON

Preached at

FAVERSHAM Church,

IN THE

County of *KENT*;

SUNDAY Morning, *May* the 16th, 1742.

BY THE

Rev. Mr. *RICHARD MASON*;
Gentleman Commoner of *Mag. Coll. Oxon.*

LONDON:

Printed in the YEAR M,DCC,XLII.

PRICE One Shilling.

The Board of Commissioners

SEERMON

Preached at

FAKERSHAM Church

IN THE

County of KENT

SUNDAY Morning the 10th 1744



BY THE

Rev. Mr. RICHARD MASON
Gentleman Commissioner of the Society

LONDON

Printed in the YEAR MDCCLIV

Price One Shilling

PHILIPPIANS *ch. iv. ver. 11.*

For I have learned in whatsoever State I am therewith to be content.



SAINTE Paul, in this Epistle, which begins with salutary Exhortations, among other his Admonitions, advises the *Philippians* to repose their whole Confidence in God; to be anxious for nothing; but by Prayer to apply themselves to the Throne of Mercy, whence their Wants would be supply'd, or they would be endued with Grace to resign humbly to what the Almighty should please to direct: after which, making grateful mention of their Liberality towards him, while under Confinement, he gives them to understand, his Joy was rather from the Grace of God in them, than for the Relief of his own Wants; for he had learned, through the Assistance of Christ, to do all things: to be content in whatever Station of Life. *I know, says St. Paul, both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer Need. Phil. ch. iv. ver. 12. For I*
A 2 *have*

4 *The Benefits of Contentment.*

have learned in whatsoever State I am therewith to be content.

In which Words of my Text the Apostle shews us, that he has attained to the Height of human Wisdom, to refer himself entirely to divine Providence, and to contentedly acquiesce in that Situation of Life which God shall be pleased to allot. If in a State of Plenty, to receive the Blessing with Thankfulness, and to make Use of it with Moderation : if in Want and Confinement, to cheerfully submit under the Affliction and wait the Almighty's good Time for his Deliverance, without Impatience or murmuring. A *Knowledge*, which makes us rich ; as Content supplies all Wants, the contented Man has no Wish to gratify ; as on the contrary, an anxious craving after more, renders the Life of the most affluent miserable. A *Knowledge*, which speaks a true Strength of Judgment ; for it makes us wisely depend upon Wisdom it self, frees us from all superfluous Care, and places our Trust on the Mercy of that benevolent Creator, who provides for the Beasts of the Fields, the Fowls of the Air, and will never desert such as rely on his bountiful Goodness. A *Knowledge*, which will alleviate the Pains of Sickness ; blunt the Darts of Adversity ; lighten the Weight of Chains ; illuminate a Dungeon ; make the severest Afflictions tolerable ; turn Ignominy to our Credit, and disarm Death of his Terrors. A
Know-

The Benefits of Contentment. 5

Knowledge, which will give a chearful Countenance to the Oppressed, and dilate with Joy the Heart of the Persecuted. A *Knowledge*, which will make us look down with Contempt on all transitory Satisfactions, as too trifling for the Dignity of our Profession, and enable us to pity and despise the limited Power and Malice of our Enemies; which, they cannot extend beyond the Grave, where, their Persecutions ending, our Happiness begins, and their Inveteracy proves our Guide to eternal Joy and Peace. In a Word, *Content*, is a *Knowledge*, which by the Serenity of Mind it affords, renders our Lives comfortable, - while in this Vale of Misery, and gives us a Foretaste of that ineffable Bliss prepared before the Foundation of the World, for the humble and resigned Servants of our God.

We may observe, that all the Precepts of the Christian Religion, are productive of both our temporal and future Happiness, as may be evinced by the Injunctions they contain of the practising Temperance, Meekness, Patience, Humility, Industry, Charity, and the like Virtues. The pursuit of the contrary Vices, we know from Experience, are productive of Evils and Misfortunes, against which the Christian Doctrine is a safe Rampart, if we will take shelter beneath it.

I shall in my present Discourse confine myself to the one Virtue, which the Apostle mentions in the Words of my Text; *Content*, or
in

6 *The Benefits of Contentment.*

in other Words, an humble Resignation to, and acquiescing in the Will of God ; which is of the utmost Importance to every State of Life, whether in an affluent Fortune or struggling with Wants ; whether laden with Honours and distinguished with pompous and sonorous Titles, or dwindled into Contempt ; whether at the Feast of a *Dives*, or in the wretched State of a *Lazarus* : for the Great and Wealthy have as much need to learn this Lesson, as the Mean and Hungry. The King and Beggar, the Master and Slave, all in general who are desirous to live well, to live happily, must seriously apply themselves to the Study and Practice of this Virtue. Wherefore I shall endeavour to shew,

First, The Nature of *Content*.

Secondly, It's constituent Parts.

Thirdly, The Advantages of it in this Life.

Fourthly, The Necessity of it.

Fifthly and lastly, Propose the Means of attaining this Virtue.

Content in *Greek* is called *αὐταρκία* from the Import of which Word comes our *English Content*, in the *Greek* it is deriyed from *αὐτός ipse* and *ἀρκίω sufficio*, denoting a Self-sufficiency, as every thing a Man possesses is according to the *Latin* Saying sufficient

The Benefits of Contentment. 7

ficient for him, if he knows how to make a prudent Use of it. *Natura sat omnibus dedit si quis cognoverit uti.* The Idea we join to this Word *Content*, is the keeping within the Bounds of Moderation, acquiescing in that State of Life to which it has pleased God to call us; the limiting our Desires, and not being anxious for the acquiring of more Wealth, or ambitious to aspire to a higher Rank or Dignity. This Virtue, which gives so great an Ornament, as well as such a steady Peace to the Mind, is, in it's Nature, a noble, generous, open, solid, equal, humane Composure of Temper: noble, as it is a Stranger to sordid Views; generous, as it envies none; open, as it apprehends not the severest Scrutiny, and is conscious of no Thought, or Action which need shun the Light; solid, as no Disasters, no Storms can shake it; equal, as it is ever the same, in whatever Changes or Vicissitudes; humane, as it rejoices in the Good, or compassionates the Misfortunes which befall others.

The Man who possesses this Virtue, is never restless, neither frets nor torments himself, nor troubles others with his Complaints and Expostulations; never murmurs at Providence; on any cross Accident, or severe Disappointment; he resigns to the Will of his Creator, and with holy *Job*, acknowledges himself in the Hands of God, as his humble Creature, to be disposed of as his good Pleasure

8 *The Benefits of Contentment.*

sure shall direct ; looks upon the Riches, he had enjoyed, and were no longer in his Possession, as those, which the Almighty had permitted him the Use of, for a Season, and when they are taken out of his Hands, owns with *Job*, the Justice of his God : *the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord. Job i. 21.* He calls to mind the Nakedness of his Birth, and the Poverty of his future Grave, and is thankful for the Time he enjoyed in Prosperity, not repining, that it is of no longer Duration ; for he knows the Blessing was spontaneous, and the Deprivation of that Blessing, what his Sins may justly have merited. However, that it is the Will of the omniscient Ruler of the World.

On the other Hand, such a Man by any sudden Advancement of Fortune, is never elated ; he apprehends for his own Frailty, and is ever on his Guard against the Poms and Vanities of the World, lest they should make him forget the liberal Hand that raised him, and his Prosperity prove a Snare to his Ruin ; He doubles his Guards against Pride, and keeps up his Humility, by considering the Instability of all human Greatness : He accepts, with Thankfulness, the Good, from the same Hand, which he should submit to with Chearfulness and Humility, bringing upon him the Evil. He knows the All-wise Creator of the Universe will dispose all Events
more

The Benefits of Contentment. 9

more to his Advantage, than he himself, had he the Power, could direct them; and therefore, in whatever Station of Life, he endeavours to behave so as may be pleasing in the Sight of God: that is his only Care; *Content* bars the Door against every other.

Let none imagine, that this Virtue is not attainable in publick Life; and that none but a Recluse, one shut up from the Bustles and Hurry of the World, can enjoy this Calm of Mind, this happy Resignation to the Will of God; or figure to themselves, that it arises from a stoical Principal, a moroseness and pride of Temper, which make Men insensible to, and suddenly careless of what passes in the World; or otherwise, from a desperate Way of thinking, the being heedless of what becomes; even of themselves; or lastly, let none mistake an indulging Indolence, or slothfulness of Nature, a Fondness of Ease; and an Aversion to the seeing or hearing what they fancy may give them Pain, for this Equanimity here spoken of; this *Content* mention'd by the Apostle. For in such Cases, *Nero* and *Domitian*, the one in his Height of Luxury, the other in his Closet murdering Flies, the snarling *Diogenes* were; and the Monks, in *Roman Catholick* Countries, at this Day, are, the happiest among Mortals: the most effeminate, the best Men, and our Saviour and the Prophets, who lived and conversed publicly, are not, in this Regard, to be copied after, as it may be alleged Christ
B could

10 *The Benefits of Contentment.*

could not sin, and the Prophets had a peculiar preventing Grace.

I on the contrary to these extravagant Notions, of retiring to Cells and Desarts, am of Opinion that the World affords more Opportunities for the cultivating this Virtue, which gathers Strength in Proportion to the Attacks made upon it ; as the fictitious Son of the Earth †, was said to rise stronger from every Fall. *Content*, which is the Gift of God to all, who humbly and sincerely implore it, cannot properly be known in a Retreat from the World : for, I fear, what many take for this Virtue, in several Convents and Monasteries, not to judge uncharitably, is rather a prudent Submission to a Course of Life they have not the Power to remedy, which some have too rashly entered upon, from Passion, Disappointment, or perhaps, have been forced into by their Parents from temporal Views.

Content is maintain'd in the daily Exercise of Christian Virtues ; in a constant Reflection on the Omniscience and Omnipotence of God on the one Hand, and on an incessant Remembrance of our own Nothingness, who are the Creatures of his Will on the other : of his Benevolence and daily Mercies, and of our Ingratitude, and repeated Sins. To be truly content, we must not only bravely resolve, but courageously act. Not faintly say, we submit to the wise Disposal of Providence, but prove it, by cheerfully yielding to any Infliction he shall please

† *Anteus.*

to

The Benefits of Contentment. 11

to try us with, and nobly reject, with Contempt and Scorn, any unjustifiable Means to extricate our selves from the Troubles we labour under ; nay, not even admit a Thought tending to any thing which our Conscience, (an impartial Judge) shall pronounce wrong, however covertly we might do it, and whatever Gain it might procure us. This is the Courage necessary, without which, we can never enjoy the Blessing of Contentment : Without we put on the Armour of Christ, his Humility and Submission to Almighty God, and behave like gallant Soldiers, we shall never be able to say with *St. Paul*, we *have learned in whatsoever State we are therewith to be content.* This leads me to speak in the

Second Place, of the constituent Parts of this Virtue.

Of these, I shall give the first Place to *Piety*, founded on the solid Basis of a sincere Faith. By *Piety* I would be understood to mean, an unfeigned Love of God for his divine Attributes, and the Mercies he has shewn us, an awful Fear of offending him, not a servile Fear, springing from an Apprehension of Punishment, but arising from a Contemplation of his Goodness. A constant Fervour in his Service, and a reverential Regard for every thing that appertains thereto. The whole Life, of the truly pious Man, is spent in unwearied Endeavours to approve himself

12 *The Benefits of Contentment.*

to his Creator ; the Law of his God is his daily Practice, and thereon does he meditate Day and Night : He constantly pays him the Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving, and calmly relies on his Benevolence and Mercy.

Such a Man, will be blameless in his Conversation, which is another constituent Part of the Blessing of *Content* ; he will revere the Truth in his Words, and be upright in his Actions : a Stranger to a double Tongue or double Dealing, to Hypocrisy, Malice, Envy or Revenge ; Vices, which are destructive of all Peace of Mind, and which will never admit *Content* to enter, where they have once taken Possession.

A third constituent Part of *Content* is Moderation, by which is to be understood, a wise Contempt of all Superfluities ; the keeping our Wishes and Desires within the Bounds of right Reason.

A fourth Part, is a generous Strength of Mind, to despise all Dangers in the Performance of our Duty ; to endure Want, Reproach, the Sarcasm of the Licentious ; nay, to embrace Death it self, rather than do any one Action, which we know displeasing to God : if we are blessed with this Fortitude ; let us however attribute the Virtue to our heavenly Father, and not presume to take the Glory to ourselves ; for should God turn his Face from us, but a Moment, our boasted Courage would sink into the vilest Pusillanimity ; of which, we have a cogent Example
in

The Benefits of Contentment. 13

in *St. Peter*, who after having vaunted that he would die for his Lord, was so terrified by a Servant Wench, that he more than once denied him.

These recited Virtues, suppose, a Conscience void of Offence; a Blessing which will enable a Man to bear up with Calmness, against all the Storms of Detraction and Calumny; and this I term a fifth Part.

Sixthly and lastly, which is included in what I have already premised, a stedfast Hope, in the Promises, which God, of his abundant Mercy (through the Merits of Christ Jesus) has been pleased to make us his unprofitable Servants, of eternal Happiness, on our Performance of the Conditions annexed. This Hope will lay before us the wide Difference between what is momentary, and everlasting; between what is perishable and permanent, between what is pure and what is mixt: as the Joys of Heaven admit no Alloy, can never satiate or diminish; and the trifling Pleasures of this transitory World are always blended with Fears, Care, Bitterness and Anxiety, and not only cloy, but are so very fleet, that they pass as a Shade, though the Sting they leave behind them is of long Duration. The true Estimate made betwixt temporal and eternal Good, or evil Things, will give us Courage to contemn the Vanities, the empty Pomp of worldly Grandeur, and make us (in the Pursuit of the future Blessings which we are assured will never end) insensible to the Stroaks of Adversity,
and

14 *The Benefits of Contentment.*

and to the Treatment of a wicked World, our Minds will be so thoroughly taken up in the Contemplation of a Crown of infinite Glory.

I have already said, that the Precepts of the Christian Religion, if attended to, are calculated for, and productive of our temporal Good as well as our eternal Happiness. Let us therefore consider the Advantages flowing from this Virtue (*Content*, with Regard to the present Life ; which is my

Third Head, and First, from the Nature of it ; and here we find, that none can be said to enjoy any Ease or Tranquility of Mind, in this World, who is a Stranger to *Content* ; for the contented Mind, is the greatest Happiness we can know on this Side the Grave, as may be proved from it's contrast, it makes the poor Man easy in his Station ; whereas, without it, the wealthiest cannot enjoy the Advantage of his Fortune ; the poor Man is exempt from the gnawing Worms of Envy and Ambition, if blessed with this Virtue ; but the GREAT, who are Strangers to it, live and often fall Martyrs to those irregular Passions ; as is evident from sacred and profane History ; in *Joab*, *Shimei*, *Haman*, *Seneca*, *Sejanus*, *Belisarius*, our *English Wolfey*, and Numbers of others, who had they studied and practiced this Virtue, would have curbed their Avarice ; humbled their Pride ; put a Check upon their Envy ; abated their Ambition ; moderated their Luxury ; or rather
have

The Benefits of Contentment. 15

have banished it; and thus have avoided falling into Ignominy and Perdition.

Thus we see from the unhappy Effects of Discontent, or which is the same thing, an immoderate Desire of Advancement, either in Wealth or Honours, passing the Bounds circumscribed by Providence, makes Men incapable of enjoying what they possess, and renders their Lives daily uneasy. *Abab* possessed of a Kingdom, knew no Comfort craving the Vineyard of *Naboth*; 1 *Kings* ch. xxi. ver. 4. And *Caligula* was uneasy that no Calamities had marked his Reign, to perpetuate his Name; and apprehended, it would be buried in Oblivion; as he had not, like preceding Emperours, spread Devastation over the Face of the Earth. *Dionysius*, was grieved, in the midst of Affluence, being the wealthiest Tyrant of his Time, that he could not excel *Philoxenus* in the composing Verses, and have a greater Reputation for Learning, than *Plato*: for which Reasons, he cast the former into a Dungeon, and the latter he banished. *Xerxes*, the *Persian* Monarch, who enjoy'd all the Pleasures the World could afford, was ever uneasy, that he could not invent others, to which, Mankind was a Stranger: but the prudent, the contented Man, can never fall into such Follies, or become a Prey to such senseless Anxieties.

Secondly, we may consider and weigh the Advantage of this Virtue *Content*, from it's having been the Object pursued by all wise Men.

16 *The Benefits of Contentment.*

Men. It was the Sum of all the old Philosophy, and the main Scope of the New. To some it has been imparted by divine Grace : others have attained to this Perfection by the Strength of Reason. *Job*, reduced from the most affluent, to the lowest Ebb of Fortune, was supported by this Virtue: *Jacob's* Desires, were bounded with Food and Raiment. *Augur's* Wish, *Prov. ch. xxx. v. 7, 8, 9.* proves not only his Moderation, but the Danger he apprehended to himself from Plenty. The *Holy Jesus*, who could command all things, was content in Poverty ; for he who made the World had not a Place, where to lay his Head. His Apostles and the primitive Christians, first from their Saviour, and then from one another, learned this admirable Lesson of Contentedness ; and *St. Paul*, who says, in *whatsoever State* he had *learned to be therewith Content*, attributes this Happiness, this Perfection, which gave him the Victory over himself and the World, to his blessed Master's supporting him. He could do that, and all things else, *through Christ, who strengthened him. Phi. ch. iv. v. 13.* But, we have the Example of many Philosophers, among the *Gentiles*, who, by Reason, and by Observation of the Instability of human Affairs only, became famous for this Virtue. *Anacharsis, Anaxagoras, Aristippus, Bias, Crates, Solon, Socrates, Zeno*, and others ; which latter rejoiced at the News of his Fortune being ruined, as it gave him an Opportunity to apply him-

The Benefits of Contentment. 17

himself to the Study of Philosophy. But to proceed to my

Fourth Head, the Necessity of being content.

And here let us consider this Virtue as our Duty which is enjoined us, and if performed, is replete with Blessings as well temporal as eternal. By our being *content*, we acknowledge the Wisdom and Justice of God, in the Disposal of the Affairs of this World; whereas repining is impeaching both, these his divine Attributes, and will certainly meet with a Punishment adequate to the heinousness of the Guilt; but the contented Man will experience the Favour of his God, and look *whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Psal. i. ver. 3.* Thus, Reason, Interest, but above both, Religion, stimulate us to the Practice of this Virtue. Wherefore I shall proceed to my

Fifth and last Head, and propose the Means to attain it.

To this End, let us reflect that God, for the regular Government of the World, and the Preservation of Order, has thought fit to introduce a Subordination; different Ranks of Men, endued with different Talents and Capacities; and that he has placed us in such a Station as he knows is best adapted to our Strength or Genius: Let us therefore never, aspiringly, look above us, but thankfully consider those who are in a more humble Station of Life, and in Want of the Necessaries

18 *The Benefits of Contentment.*

we enjoy : but if we are at the very lowest Ebb of Fortune ; if we have not Means to guard against the Inclemencies of the Seasons, or to satisfy the importunate Cravings of Nature, let us then examine our pass'd Lives, and impartially reflect whether our own Extravagance, Sloth, or other Vice or Folly has not brought us into this miserable Situation ; and if, on an impartial Scrutiny, we can clear ourselves from being the Authors of this Misfortune, these Wants ; let us consider from whence they come ; that if they are not the Punishment of our Sins, remember they are the Trials which our God is pleased to make of our Virtue : call to mind the powerful Hand which inflicts these Severities, and our own helpless Condition ; and instead of repining and growing impatient with Omnipotence, which is kicking against the Pricks, humbly resign to his Will ; consider he has provided for and supported us hitherto ; that he delights not in the Miseries of his Creatures, is a God of Mercy, and has the Power to relieve us, when we may reasonably despair of all human Assistance. He can raise us Bread out of Stones, and living Springs out of the dry Rocks. When *Hagar's* Bottle was exhausted and she and her Child perishing with Thirst, in a barren Wilderness, God discovered to her a Well of Water. *Gen. ch. xxi. ver. 19.* At another time when there was no Rain in the Land, the same God sent his Prophet *Elijah the Tishbite*, to the Brook *Cherith*,

The Benefits of Contentment. 19

Cherith, and fed him Morning and Evening with Bread and Flesh, by the Bills of *Ravens*, *1 Kings ch. xvii. ver. 6.* when this Brook was dried up, God commanded a poor Widow of *Zarephath* to relieve him, and made an Handful of Meal and a little Oil in a Cruse, multiplied by his Blessing in a miraculous Manner, sustain both him and the Widow's Family, till Plenty appear'd again in the Land. *1 Kings ch. xvii. ver. 15, 16.* Holy Writ affords us other Examples of the like Mercy. Thus, by our reflecting on his Providence, on his Power and Compassion to Mankind, it will enable us to bear up against the severest Adversities, patiently to resign ourselves to his Almighty Will, and to deprecate his Anger. He knows all our Necessities, and if we bear them as we ought, we have, beside the daily Proofs of his paternal Care, several gracious Promises that he will not forsake those who put their Trust in him; and for any Persons, to despond under Pressures, is a Crime so great, that it is plainly declaring we do not believe him, who is the Fountain of Truth; and thus, deprive ourselves of the comfortable Hopes which these Promises administer; in which he obliges himself to maintain us. To conclude, let us constantly bear in mind the Advice of our blessed Saviour; *Take no Thought for your Life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your Body what ye shall put on: is not the Life more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment?*

20 *The Benefits of Contentment.*

Raiment? Behold the Fowls of the Air: for they Sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they? which of you by taking Thought can add one Cubit unto his Stature? And why take ye Thought for Raiment? Consider the Lilies of the Field how they grow, they toil not neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his Glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so cloath the Grass of the Field, which to Day is, and to morrow is cast into the Oven, shall he not much more cloath you, O ye of little Faith? Matt. ch. vi. ver. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.

After this energetick Argument of our blessed Lords, I need use no other to persuade every real Christian, not to be over anxious for the obtaining any thing in this Life, but to rely on the Providence of God, and to be able by an entire Resignation to his Will, to bear up with Christian Fortitude, under the severest Trials; that each Individual may say with *St. Paul, I have learned, in whatever State I am therewith to be content:* Which God of his Mercy grant we may all be, to the Glory of his Name, and eternal Salvation of our own Souls, through the Merits of his blessed Son our Redeemer Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honour, Praise and Dominion, till Time itself shall be no more. *Amen.*

F I N I S.



A Dissuasive from rash Censures.

A
S E R M O N
Preached at
F A V E R S H A M
I N T H E
County of *K E N T*;

O N
SUNDAY Afternoon, *May* the 23d, 1742.

B Y T H E
Rev. Mr. *RICHARD MASON*,
Gentleman Commoner of *Mag. Coll. Oxon.*

L O N D O N:
Printed in the Y E A R M, DCC, XLII.

P R I C E One Shilling.



St.

Ju



an
Pr
cu
bu
T
a
m
g
w
f
i
v
c

St. M A T T. *ch. vii. ver. 1, 2.*

*Judge not, that ye be not judged. For
with what Judgment ye judge, ye
shall be judged : and with what
Measure ye mete, it shall be mea-
sured to you again.*



OUR blessed Lord and Saviour who, continually, in his Doctrine inculcates Love, Charity, Forbearance : Meekness, Humanity, Forgiveness of Injuries, and such other Virtues, as if practised by the Professors of his Name ; not only would secure everlasting Joy and Happiness hereafter ; but introduce such Harmony and inward Tranquility even in this Life, that it would in a Manner, anticipate the Joys of Heaven, by making Men little differing from the Angels : Our blessed Lord, I say, in the Chapter whence I have taken my Text, keeps the same Point of brotherly Affection and Charity in View, and by directing us to behave with Tenderneſs to each other, ſows the Seeds of Peace, which if they take Root in our
A Hearts,

4 A D I S S U A S I V E

Hearts, will afford us a plentiful Harvest of present Satisfaction, and future Blessedness, in the Possession of Joys, as inexpressible, as eternal.

At the same Time that he instructs his Followers, he seems to reprove the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, a supercilious, magisterial and severe Set of Men, extremely rigid and censorious with Regard to others; vain and conceited in the Justification of themselves.

Discouraging on the Text, I shall observe it contains,

First, A Prohibition, *Judge not.*

Secondly, a Reason for our having Regard to this Prohibition, *that we be not judged.*

Thirdly, I shall shew that the Prohibition is in a restricted Sense, it does not include Magistrates in their publick Capacity, or such whose Office it is to reprove.

Fourthly and Lastly, I shall offer some Cautions to prevent rash and censorious Reflections on others.

As to the first Head, *Judge not.*

There is one sovereign and supreme Judge of the World, who alone, has immediate Power to absolve or condemn; before whom, every Man must give an Account of his Actions, who will execute Judgment with Righteousness; whose Creatures, from the highest

highest to the lowest, we equally are ; who is jealous of his Honour, and commands us not to erect our selves Judges over one another ; for it is an Insult upon his Prerogative, who alone has the Power to judge of the Hearts of Men : it is usurping his Authority, stepping into his Throne, and pretending to more than human Wisdom ; for us poor weak-sighted sinful Mortals, to take upon us to judge and pass Sentence upon one another. *Judge not.* We must not magisterially assume an Authority of censuring others, which we will not allow them to exercise over us : The Rule laid down for the Practice of such as profess the Name of Christ is diametrically contrary to this Presumption of seating ourselves in the Judgment Seat, canvassing the Words or Actions of our Brethren ; as if our Decrees, our Opinions were to be a Law. *My Brethren, be not many Masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater Condemnation. For in many Things we offend all. James ch. iii. v. 1, 2.* As we have no delegated Power to this End, we are not to usurp it.

Every one who speaketh ill of his Neighbour, sets himself up as a Judge. *Speak not Evil one of another. He that speaketh Evil of his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, speaketh Evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law. Ja. ch. iv. ver. 11.* And indeed what is it other than to condemn a Law, as unjust, to
act

act contrary to it ; and how great a Sin that is need not be taught, for you cannot condemn or censure a Law, but you condemn or censure the Law-giver, and here, that is, God himself.

We must be upon our Guard, that we do not declare ourselves *Judges of the Law*, by infringing *the Law*. We are not to conclude upon a Man's Life by any of his Actions ; for we know not the Hearts of Men ; we know our own, let us examine them ; let us set up Judges of our own Thoughts and Actions ; let us take Care to weed and root out all inordinate Affections, to keep our Minds bent on the Duties incumbent on us for the procuring our own Salvation, and avoid criticizing the Lives of others. Were every one of us more employed in looking into ourselves, we should not be so busy in examining others, and we should not hear so much Calumny, as is too frequent in all Companies, Scandal being chiefly the general Topic ; the only Entertainment ; to the great Reproach of Christianity, and the endangering the Souls of such, as heedless of our Lord's Prohibition, *Judge not*, delight in tearing to Pieces the Reputation of their Neighbours, and the propagating defamatory Reports, to the Prejudice of, too often, innocent, consequently injured People.

We are, when we hear the Character of any one attack'd, to think it may be our own
Case,

Case, the Moment of our Absence ; as soon as the Detractor has lost Sight of us, and judge candidly as we wish others may judge of us : we are to suspend our Opinions, and to reflect, that Prejudice, Revenge, or, as 'tis too often the Case, a defamatory Tongue, a Delight to speak Evil, may either have invented or propagated what is false ; but on the contrary, if we are really convinced our Neighbour has given but too good Grounds for Censure, yet we are not to judge uncharitably ; we ought to consider the Person censured as a Man, our Brother ; allow for Frailties of human Nature, and before we give Sentence, remember what our blessed Saviour said to those who brought before him the Woman taken in Adultery. *He that is without Sin among you, let him first cast a Stone at her.* St. John, ch. viii. ver.

7. Before we condemn or despise another, let us be sure that there is no Cause in ourselves for Recrimination. Nay, could we say we have been guilty of no Action, of not even a Thought, which would not bear the Light ; we are to consider we are so far from being Judges of others, that we are expressly forbidden the assuming this Authority. *Judge not.*

We know how liable we all are to be deceived with Appearances, and therefore ought to guard against rashly censuring others, or receiving an ill Impression of them, lest we should hereafter find we had injured a Person, whom

whom we ought rather to have cherished and defended: Even Men who act with the greatest Caution, Judges and Juries, who examine and cross examine Witnesses, who sift and weigh the minutest Circumstances; deliberate on every Particular; take Time for mature Consideration; have, misled by Appearances and false Evidence, been found sometimes to have condemned the Innocent. This Consideration alone will weigh with an honest Heart to suspend his Judgment, lest being deceived, he does an irreparable Injury. Wherefore it behoves us, both with Regard to others and ourselves, whenever we find that we are pleased with and inclined to join in a Slander, to call to Mind this Command, *Judge not.* Which leads me to my

Second Head, The Reason for our having Regard to this Prohibition, *that ye be not judged.*

The censorious Person seems to declare War against the whole World, and as he spares the Character of none, so, is his Reputation attacked by all. He that will usurp the Seat of the Judge, shall be dragged to the Bar of the Criminal. All good Men are afraid of, and avoid such as delight in Scandal, and no Man, will justify him, when his good Name is attacked: Such as will not join in defaming him, will however be silent, and say nothing in his Defence, for
they

they will look upon it no more than a Piece of Justice done, according to the Laws of Retaliation : but indeed what can be offered to justify the Man who delights in the Destruction of his Neighbour, who murders him in his Reputation, esteemed by every thinking Man more valuable than even Life itself; since that, when once our good Name is lost, when we are pointed at, and Mankind warned to be upon their Guard against us, can be termed no other than a Burthen ?

He that detracts others, will have a Number of Detractors ; whereas every one is the Friend of him, who is careful of his Neighbour's Character, and will not only avoid Censure himself, but check it in others. The former we may compare to *Isbmael*, as his Hand was against every Man, and every Man's Hand against Him. *Gen. ch. xvi. ver. 12.* So is the Detractors Tongue against every Man, and every Man's Tongue against him : He passes his Life, in a continual Storm ; the latter, like *Titus Vespasian*, merits the Epithet of Darling of Mankind and enjoys a perpetual Calm ; but this making the World in general Enemies, is not the worst Consequence of our disobeying the Command of God in censuring our Neighbours. No, we make God our Enemy, we shall be judged of God, and from him shall receive the greater Condemnation. The humble injured

B

Man

Man, and the haughty Calumniator shall both appear before him.

But why dost thou judge thy Brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy Brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Rom. ch. xiv. ver. 10.

Which is the same, as if the Apostle had said, what art thou, who takest upon thee to thrust thyself into the Councils of God; presumest to pass Sentence upon thy Brother, and puffed up with a Conceit of thy superior Merit, to despise and slight him? Art thou not thy self, a poor, corrupt, weak, Creature; who art to appear before the Judge of the *Living* and the *Dead*, and before him, to give an Account, and receive Sentence according to the Use thou hast made of thy Time? Art thou any more than the Brother whom thou condemnest, and holdest at nought, art thou satisfied thy past Life will meet with the Approbation of that impartial Judge, before whom thou mayest appear less worthy of Mercy? Before whom thy rash Sentence against, and thy ill Opinion and Contempt of thy Brother, may add to the Number of thy other Crimes? Remember, *With what Judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what Measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* If thou hast been severe in censuring thy Brother, thou shalt find a Judge severe in passing Judgment upon thyself. The Cruel shall experience

a terrible Judge, and the Merciful shall find Mercy. God will pardon the Placable, such as not only are ready to forgive Injuries, but are also afraid to affront divine Majesty, by taking upon them to condemn their Brethren, because possibly they themselves may imagine they are injured by them.

We are partial, I fear, all of us, when we set ourselves up for Judges, being Parties. The just Man, by which Epithet, I mean the Man who fears God; leaves his Cause to his Decision: will not venture to judge, that he may not be judged; this Procedure is an Evidence of our Humility, Charity and Deference, to the Command of our Creator; and though, whatever we are capable of doing, though our Righteousness in his Sight is as *filthy Rags*, yet his Mercy will attribute it to us as a Merit, and as such, reward it. We are not, my beloved in Christ, to judge, 'tis the Command of God, and if we go counter to, that is, dare to disobey this Command, we shall be judged not only by Men but by Him. But in this Command you are not to suppose, that God intends the Wicked are to escape Punishment in this World, or that none are to take upon them to reprove their Brethren. No, the former would introduce innumerable Mischiefs, and the latter might prove the Loss of many Souls. For it is thro' God, by his delegated Power, that Princes *decree Justice*, and this brings me to my

Third Head, That this Prohibition is, in a restricted Sense, it does not include Magistrates in their Publick Capacity, or such whose Office it is to reprove.

Man in the State of Nature seems to be in a State of Warfare, and 'tis the coercive Power of Civil Government, entrusted to Magistrates, that alone restrains the Stronger, void of Religion, from making a Prey of the Weaker. This Power of Magistrates is derived from the Supreme Being. *There is*, says St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, ch. xiii. ver. 1. *No Power but of God : the Powers that be, are ordained of God*, and gives this Delegation, from God, as a Reason, why Magistrates, and those in Authority ought to be feared. It is a Point of Conscience on our Sides, to submit to the higher Powers as well as a Point of Prudence. With Regard to the former, the same Apostle teaches in the following verse, that *Whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God : and they that resist, shall receive to themselves Damnation*. Rom. ch. xiii. ver. 2. With Regard to the latter ; a general Disobedience must necessarily introduce a general Confusion ; there would no longer be any Property, neither could any Man be in greater Security with Regard to his Life than to his Goods. Now as Obedience is required from us, so Protection is expected from Magistrates ;

gistrates : *For Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil.* Rom. ch. xiii. ver.

3. They are to administer Justice, and to that End are invested with a Power to call to Account and punish the Wicked. *Wilt thou then not be afraid of the Power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have Praise of the same.* For as on the one Hand it is the Magistrates Duty to punish the Vicious, so it is on the other to encourage and cherish the Virtuous. *For he is the Minister of God to thee for Good. But if thou do that which is Evil be afraid; for he beareth not the Sword in vain: for he is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doeth Evil.* Rom. ch. xiii. ver. 4. Whence it is evident that Magistrates, with Regard to their publick Capacity, are not included in this Prohibition, *Judge not*, though it is equally directed to them with private Men, when *They* act not juridically.

As Magistrates are not included as such, neither is this Prohibition extended to such, whose Office or Duty it is to reprove: As Ministers of the Gospel, Parents, Masters and Mistresses of Servants, or such Officers as they shall think fit to entrust with the Management of their Affairs. Nay sometimes 'tis a charitable Duty, though we have no such Relation, to admonish and reprove a Brother whom we see endanger either his Soul or Body. But then, this Admonition must
proceed

proceed from a tender Concern for the Welfare of our Brother, and must be void of all Asperity.

It is not every one who is a proper Person to reprove, neither is every one a proper Person to be reprov'd. What Effect would a Drunkard's reprov'ing his Neighbour for excessive Drinking have? Certainly no other than exposing him who reprov'd to the Retort of *Physician heal thy self*. Those who reprove Vice in others, must be clear of it themselves, or it will bring upon them Shame, without profiting their Brother. *Why beholdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brothers Eye, but considerest not the Beam that is in thine own Eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy Brother, let me pull out the Mote out of thine Eye; and behold, a Beam is in thine own Eye?* Matt. ch. vii. ver. 3, 4. Such a Man in reprov'ing, would justly be term'd rather censorious than charitable, and ought to be advis'd to look at home, and begin the reforming the World by amending himself: and this does not hold good in private Life only, but in Publick; for the Minister who preaches up Virtue and practises Vice; who inveighs against Drinking and is himself a Sot: who teaches others not to censure and detract their Neighbours, and is himself an Inventer and Propogator of Scandal, will find his preaching, though he be never so florid an Orator, have but little Effect

fect on those who know him, and who will not fail of saying, he ought to inculcate these Doctrines by his Example, and if they are necessary to Salvation, to give Proof he really thinks them so, by the Practice of them.

As such Men are very unlikely to reprove others efficaciously, so there are others who are very unfit to be reproved. *Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent you.* Matt. ch. vii. ver. 6.

There are Men so absolutely governed by their Passions; act so irrationally, are so drowned in Sensuality, and guilty of such filthy such unnatural Crimes, that they justly may be compared to Beasts, and even to the most filthy of Beasts, Dogs and Swine. *They have so long walked in the Way of Sinners, that they are set down in the Seat of the Scornful.* Psal. ii. They hate Instruction, and despise the Man who offers it to them, such are very unfit for Reproof, and to admonish them is giving *that which is holy unto the Dogs, and casting Pearls before Swine.* With such the most tender and friendly Reproofs will be esteemed Reproaches. *Behold, the Word of the Lord is unto them a Reproach, they have no Delight in it.* Jer. ch. vi. ver. 10. *As an Ear-ring of Gold, and an Ornament of fine Gold, so is a wise Reprover upon an obedient Ear :* Prov. ch. xxv. ver. 12. but it is throwing

throwing away Reproof, which is an excellent Oil, and we can expect no other than Contempt and mischievous Resentment from such as are irrecoverably lost to Religion, Shame, and Reason : As a Swine will resent the throwing a Pearl at him as much as a Stone, so will such Men esteem Reproof, the highest Affront that can be offered, the greatest Injury that can be done them, and endeavour accordingly to revenge it. Wherefore great Discretion is necessary, both in the examining ourselves if we are proper to reprove others, and considering whether the Person is capable of Reproof ; whether our Reproof proceeds from a sincere Desire of our Neighbour's Welfare, or from any Pique, Resentment, or Ill-Will, toward him. If from the former it is a laudable Act of Charity ; if from the latter, it is a very great Sin, and directly acting against the Commandment *Judge not*

I now proceed to my fourth and last Head, and shall offer some Cautions, to prevent rash and censorious Reflections on others, or which is the same thing, *judging others*.

I shall do this with Regard to God, — with Regard to ourselves.

With Regard to God, we are to consider, that as he has made the Universe, and we ourselves being the Work of his Hands, so he has reserved the Power of ruling both that and

and us, as his infinite Wisdom shall think fit to direct and ordain. He hath ordered the Course of the Planets, set Bounds to the Sea, directed the Succession of Seasons and Generations, and given to Men Laws by which they are to guide their Lives : and we see he is obey'd by the inanimate Creation, Man alone rebels against infinite Wisdom and infinite Power ; and he has reserved to himself, the sole Prerogative of judging such as continue in their Rebellion, that is, in Disobedience to his divine Injunctions ; but we arrogantly presume to dispute him this his Right, when even contrary to his express Will, we set our selves up to be Judges and Censurers of others ; a grievous Sin, which he will severely punish : A Presumption so great, that when we seriously consider what God is, and who we are, we shall tremble at our having been guilty, and loose no Time in humbly repenting of it : A Species of Pride very near approaching to that of the fallen Angels, who though the Creatures of his Will pretended to be equal to their Creator, and thus provoking his Wrath felt his Power, and from the Summit of Bliss, were hurled into the Depth of Misery, where such as will copy insolent Pride, will share in *their* endless Punishment. Wherefore, *judge not, that ye be not judged.*

With Regard to ourselves, if we would thoroughly inspect our own Hearts, and be

impartial in our Judgment, on our own Situation, the best among us would be ashamed to censure his Neighbour. I shall here to this Purport, quote the Words of that excellent Author *Thomas a Kempis*, " We
 " are sometimes moved with Passion, and
 " think it Zeal ; we reprehend small Things
 " in others, and pass over greater Matters,
 " in ourselves. We quickly feel and weigh
 " what we suffer at the Hands of others ;
 " but we mind not what others suffer from
 " us. He that doth well and rightly consider his own Actions, will find little
 " Cause to judge hardly of another".

" The inward Christian preferreth the
 " Care of himself before all other Cares ;
 " and he that diligently attendeth unto himself doth seldom speak much of others.
 " Thou wilt never be so inwardly Religious,
 " unless thou pass over other Mens Affairs
 " with Silence, and look especially to thyself. If thou attend wholly unto God
 " and thyself, thou wilt be little moved with
 " whatever thou seest Abroad. Where art
 " thou, when thou art not with thyself ?
 " That is when thou leavest the Care of
 " thy own Amendment, to observe and
 " censure the Lives or Actions of thy
 " Neighbour, and when thou hast run over
 " all what hast thou then profited, if thou
 " hast neglected thyself ? If thou desirest
 " Peace

“ Peace of Mind and true Union, thou must
“ put all things behind thee and look only
“ upon thyself”. Thus far that truly religious Man.

To conclude, our Peace and Interest ought to keep a Guard upon our Tongues and be a Barrier against Scandal, as I have shewn the Censurer will have few if any Friends, but a Number of Enemies in this Life; and in the Life to come, this Itch of evil Speaking, cruelly tearing in Pieces the Reputation of his Neighbour, will give him over to the Revilings of those accursed Fiends, who prompted him to the eternal Loss of his Soul, by endeavouring to destroy the Character of others. Let us all remember, that the same *Measure we mete shall be measured unto us again.* If we have been cruel in our Censures we shall be condemned by a Judge who will retaliate our Want of Charity, by a Sentence which will be void of Mercy: Which that we may not fall under, let us *not judge.* Let us avoid with Care, *Whisperers, Tale-bearers* and *Detractors*: consider all Mankind as our Brethren, the Work of God's Hands, and treat them with Humanity, Charity, brotherly Love and Affection; that at the last Day we may experience the Promise of our Lord and Saviour, *Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy.* Matt. ch. v. ver. 7. Which God of his infinite Mercy

Mercy grant may be the Portion of all of us,
through the Merits of his blessed Son, to
whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, be
ascribed all Honour, Glory and Dominion,
to all Eternity. *Amen.*

F I N I S.



An Exhortative to REPENTANCE.

A
S E R M O N

Preached at

Bishops-Castle Church,

I N T H E

County of *SALOP*;

SUNDAY Morning, *May* the 10th, 1741.

B Y T H E

Rev. Mr. *RICHARD MASON*;
Gentleman Commoner of *Mag. Coll. Oxon.*

L O N D O N;

Printed in the Y E A R M,DCC,XLII.

PRICE One Shilling.

AN ESSAY ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE

SERMON

PREACHED AT

BISHOP'S-COFFEE CHURCH

IN THE

COUNTRY OF SALOP

SUNDAY THE 10TH 1741



BY THE

Rev. Mr. RICHARD MASON,
Gentleman's Companion of the Bath, &c.

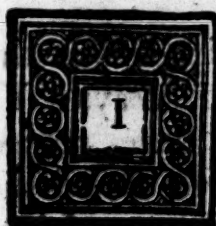
LONDON:

Printed in the YEAR MDCCLXII.

Price One Shilling.

HOSEA. *ch. x. ver. 12.*

*Sow to yourselves in Righteousness,
reap in Mercy, break up your fal-
low Ground.*



IT is observable that Men readily listen to, and eagerly pursue such Advice, as they are convinced will turn to their temporal Interest; but, unwillingly give Attention to that, which tends to the eternal Welfare of their precious Souls; notwithstanding they are thoroughly sensible, of the vast Disproportion between transitory and permanent Advantages; and thus evince, they too often act against, the Dictates of their Reason. But certainly, never did a People give greater Proofs of this Perverseness, than the *Jews*; who notwithstanding the Conviction of their Senses, notwithstanding the severe Punishments which attended their Idolatry, return'd to it as the Dog to his Vomit; from which inconsiderate Behaviour, the Prophet takes Occasion to reprove and threaten them, saying, *They have made to themselves goodly Images,*

4 *An Exhortative to Repentance.*

images, Verse the first ; and in the thirteenth Verse, ye have plowed Wickedness, therefore, Verse the fourteenth, shall a Tumult arise among thy People, and all thy Fortresses shall be spoiled. But, he exhorts them before this Menace, in the Words of my Text, to avert the impending Evil, by Repentance, and a new Course of Life ; *Sow to yourselves in Righteousness, reap in Mercy, break up your fallow Ground :* Which figurative Way of speaking, we may interpret after the following Manner.

What have you hitherto gained, but the consequential Fruits of your evil Ways ? Ye have plowed Wickedness, ye have reaped Iniquity, for the Product will ever be of the Species of the Seed sown, while your Lives are wicked, Evil must attend you ; wherefore, as your Hearts have been long uncultivated, and you have been careless of performing the Duty incumbent on you to your God, and have thus been Enemies to yourselves, by throwing off the Protection of the Almighty, consequently losing his Blessing : As our Creator is the Fountain of Mercy, as his Ears and Arms are ever open to hear, and receive the Penitent, it is time to turn from your evil Ways, implore his Mercy, repent of your former Transgressions, and shew the Contrition of your Hearts, by the Purity of your future Lives, making such Return to the Almighty for his loving Mercy and long
Suf-

An Exhortative to Repentance. 5

Suffering as is in your Power ; namely, by attending on his Worship, honouring his holy Name ; not by sacrificing Oxen, or burning Incense upon his Altars, but by approaching him with clean Hearts and sincere Lips, with grateful Praise and Thanksgivings, proceeding from a just Sense of his Goodness towards you ; with Humility, arising from a wise Reflection, on the wide Difference between an infinite powerful God, and a poor helpless Mortal ; between a Creator and his Creature, which owes it's Being and Preservation to the Will and Bounty of it's Maker. Remember that you act in his immediate Sight, which you cannot elude, and from whose piercing Rays nothing can escape ; that he is the Source of Purity, and let this keep you ever on your Guard, not to stray from the Paths of Righteousness which will lead you to the Enjoyment of infallible Blessings, to step into those of Perdition : And as your Duty to God, cannot be thoroughly complied with if you do not, as far as the Frailty of human Nature will permit, copy after his divine Attributes, it necessarily includes your Duty to your Brethren ; for you cannot be said to fear God, if you do not also do Justice and love Mercy : Wherefore prepare your Hearts to receive these Seeds of Righteousness, to which they have been too long unaccustomed, and you will find them productive of fresh Mercies.

In

6 *An Exhortative to Repentance.*

In Discourfing on the Words of my Text,
I fhall obferve they contain,

First, An Exhortation to a new Life,

Secondly, A Promise of a Bleffing, following Repentance.

Laftly, Make my Application:

First, I am to fhew the Words of the Text, contain an Exhortation for us to lead a new Life. *Sow to yourfelves in Righteoufnefs*; that is, let your future Employments be the Works of Mercy, Juftice, Truth; adore the divine Being, who has fo manifftly been your Protector, fo often has effaced your Sins, and relieved you from the Calamities which they have brought upon you; when, by a fincere Repentance and Humiliation, you have look'd up to, and petition'd the Throne of Grace, for Mercy. It is you alone can reap the Advantage of your Penitence and Adoration, 'tis to yourfelves, that you fow in Righteoufnefs; for alas! What can your Incenfe, your Sacrifices, your Praises, avail, the eternally happy Creator; can you add any thing to Immenfity? Think you that God can receive any Satisfaction from your Humiliation, and is it not purely the Effect of his Mercy, that he thus wooes you to your own Happinefs? *Break up your fallow Grounds*; you have been long negligent of
your

An Exhortative to Repentance. 7

your Duty, consequently long cruel to yourselves; a Consideration, which ought to make you apprehend the Fatality of longer delaying your Return to God, that you may conciliate his Favour, and experience farther Blessings, which a new Course of Life in the Performance of incumbent Duties will not fail of bringing upon you.

I thus far have paraphrased, on this figurative Way made Use of by the Prophet. This Exhortation, was to a People encouraged to a good Life, by the Promise of temporal Blessings only, as we may observe in the fifth Commandment, the Blessing promised to the Honour shewn their Parents was a Length of Days, to enjoy the fruitful Land which God had assigned them. *Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy Days may be long in the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Exod. ch. xx. ver. 12.* They were not blessed with the Light of the Gospel, and such explicit Assurances of future Happiness, to encourage them to Virtue and Piety; or of future Punishments, to deter them from Wickedness as are we Christians; consequently, as our Reward or Punishment is plainly made known to us, and so vastly beyond any temporal Blessing or Calamity, we ought to be much more stimulated, by a Reflection on them, to the Performance of our Duty, and more greatly apprehend the Consequence of our Neglect. Let us therefore take Advantage of this Exhortation

8 *An Exhortative to Repentance.*

hortation of the Prophet, to *sow to ourselves in Righteousness, and break up our fallow Grounds*; enter upon an immediate Course of Virtue and Piety, and not longer delay the great Work of our Salvation.

The Husbandman does not expect the Ground, which is neither broken up nor sown with Seed, will yield of it self a Crop of Corn for his Support; he knows, that Care and Labour must preceed his Profit, and does not flatter himself with Impossibilities: He does what is necessary, breaks up his fallow Ground, improves it, sows it with Corn, takes Care to clear the rising Blade from noxious Weeds; and when he has done his Part, when he has bestow'd this requisite Industry, he leaves the rest to God. Shall we then, who are careful and indefatigable for the Support of Life; who will chearfully undergo any Toil for the Hopes of Lucre, be less negligent for the eternal Welfare of our Souls! Or can any of us be so wretchedly sottish, as to imagine, that it requires no Vigilance, no Industry, no Thought, to work out our Salvation! Can we be insensible of the numerous Dangers to which we are exposed, even when the good Seed is sown, that is, when we have resolved upon a Course of Life, becoming rational Creatures, who have so often been admonished by holy Writ, of the Certainty of a future blessed or most miserable State for all Eternity; I say, can we
be

An Exhortative to Repentance. 9

be insensible, even when we have resolved upon a strict Compliance with Reason and our Duty ; how many Weeds spring up from the Cares, Disappointments, and prevalent Example of a vicious World, to choak this good Seed, and render void our pious Resolves, which require our constant Care, and Vigilance to root up, before they gather Strength, and render our Hopes of a good Crop, abortive.

If we are then thoroughly convinced, from our Practice in worldly Affairs, and the very nature of things, that our utmost Care and Vigilance is most requisite, where the danger of miscarrying in our Views is the greatest, if we are not ignorant of the vast Disproportion between Momentary and never failing Riches ; if we really believe the Promises of endless Joys, and the Threats of never ceasing Torments, according as our Lives in this World have entitled us to the one, or doom'd us to the other ; If we are truly sensible that by our Remissness, we have already run a Risque, too great to be reflected upon as it ought, without a Tremor on the one Hand, and Thankfulness on the other, for the long-suffering and forbearance, of an offended Deity ; who is slow to wrath, and will's not the death of a Sinner, but rather, that he should repent and live ; if, I say, we are not ignorant of all these Truths ; Let us from this Instant begin, seriously to reflect on that Time we have already lost, and the uncertainty of

10 *An Exhortative to Repentance.*

our having a longer Space allotted us, to prepare for our great Change, which will fix us Eternally in either the Joys or Miseries of the Life to come. I proceed now to my

Second Head, to wit, the Promise of a Blessing following Repentance.

Reap in Mercy. Long Experience, says the Prophet, and numberless Mercies received, must have convinced you, that, as on the one Hand Misfortunes and dismal Calamities, have been the constant Effects of your forgetting God, as your Thoughts, as your Views have been evil, so evil has been their Produce; and you could not naturally expect any other Fruit of your Labour, *Ye have sown the Wind, and ye shall reap the Whirlwind*, Hosea ch. viii. v. 7. such Grain as you employ for Seed, such, shall you reap. Evil is productive of Evil; as I say, you have felt the smart of following your Lusts, and, have on the one hand experienced the fatal Effects of turning from God, who has also turn'd his Face from you; So, on the other Hand, you have proved him a God of Mercy, when ever you repented of your Wickedness and implored his Assistance; This therefore ought to encourage you to believe your future unfeign'd Repentance cannot be in vain. Nay, you have the promise of Truth it self; for after the Almighty has threatned to avert his Eyes from you, and to be deaf to your Prayers, yet still
upon

An Exhortative to Repentance. II

upon your Contrition, and returning to your Duty, your Sins shall be forgiven, *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow.* Come now, and let us reason together *saith the Lord : though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow; though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool,* Isa. ch. i. ver. 16, 17, 18. Again, He promises by the Mouth of his Prophet *Jeremiah,* chapter the xviii. ver. 8. that Repentance shall not fail of pacifying his Wrath, and of averting his Judgments; *If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil, that I thought to do unto them.*

I have thus shewn by this short Comment on the Prophet's Words, which I have chosen for my Text, that the Mercies the Penitent have already experienced, are sufficient to encourage the Sinner to hope, that he shall find the same Blessing will attend his future Repentance, and from the Promise of the Almighty himself, that he cannot fail of Mercy and Pardon.

Let us now therefore, both Priests and People, apply to ourselves what the Prophet preached to the *Jews*, for alas ! What will this Assurance avail us, if we do not also perform the Conditions stipulated on our Part,

12 *An Exhortative to Repentance.*

namely, turn from our Evil ! Without which, all Hopes of Salvation are as vain, as would be Endeavours to unite Fire and Water in such a Manner, as that the one shall continue to emit Warmth, and the other retain it's Frigidity.

The Almighty is Purity itself, and whatever is impure, is abhorrent from his Nature. If we therefore hope for his Blessing and Protection in this World, and to enjoy his glorious Presence in the next, we must endeavour to wash away our Pollution, with the Tears of Repentance. How idle, my Beloved, would appear to us the Hopes of a leprous Beggar, whose Sores were noisom to the Sight and Smell, and covered with Rags, to be admitted to the Presence of an earthly King ! And can we flatter ourselves with the Leprosy of our Sins upon us, that we shall gain Admittance to the Throne of the King of Kings, whose Eyes can suffer no Impurity ?

'Tis as impossible, for the Impenitent to enter those pure Regions of eternal Happiness, as 'tis for Light and Darkness to subsist at one and the same Time, in one and the same Place : As we are assured and often admonished of this by Holy Writ ; as 'tis agreeable to Reason and the very Nature of Things, and as we know not how soon we may be summoned hence, let us (I once more repeat it) from this Instant, set about the securing to ourselves a happy Futurity ; in Comparison

An Exhortative to Repentance. 13

son of which, every temporary Advantage is to be disregarded, as unworthy of our Care : Have our Grounds lain Fallow, let us break them up, that is, have we hitherto been remiss in our Duty, let us industriously apply ourselves to make amends for the lost Time, by making the most of that which our ever merciful God shall still afford us ; and by reflecting on the Danger pass'd, of being cut off in the midst of our Sins, avoid running the same Risque.

Had we a determined Space allotted us, those Persons who think it time enough to repent, when Age will no longer allow our being actually wicked, might plead some Excuse for their Delay, tho' a bad one : But, as every Person is sensible this is far from being our Case, and that neither the greatest Monarch nor the wisest Man, has any Certainty that he shall see the Rising-Sun in it's Meridian Height, or the Setting-Sun light up a new Day ; none but Man, too inconsiderate to reflect on the immense Stake he hazards, even his Soul, would postpone the Work of his Repentance one Moment ; but would from the present resolve upon, and pursue an immediate Reformation, by imploring the Assistance of the Divine Grace ; by humbling himself before the Throne of Mercy, by a thorough Confession of his past Wickedness ; a true Contrition for having offended a God of such Long-suffering and
For-

14 *An Exhortative to Repentance.*

Forbearance, and by regulating his future Life according to the Will of God, as taught in Holy Writ: which he will find comprehended in few Words, and nothing difficult in Practice. *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah ch. vi. ver. 8.* And in several Places of the inspired Writings, we find our whole Duty summ'd up in fearing God, which includes Adoration, and in being just the one to the other. *On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. Matt. ch. xxii. ver. 40.* But why do we find such Reluctance in unhappy Men, to the entering upon the Performance of their Duty? 'Tis certainly from an idle Notion, that it is too difficult to be complied with, and requires too severe Mortifications of our Passions, too strict a Guard upon our Actions; sowres our Tempers, and renders us austere and unsociable. And whence proceeds this false Opinion of a religious Life; but from too great a fondness, too tender an indulgence of some favourite Vice, which we are loath to part with, and which whispers to us, that the most rational Scheme of Life, is the most impracticable; and thus deters us from entering upon a Tryal, a bringing these imaginary Difficulties to the Proof of Experience, which would soon evince the contrary of these Suggestions of our Senses, and
that

An Exhortative to Repentance. 15

that the Satisfaction, the Pleasures of which a regular pious Life is productive, are not only more permanent, but beyond all Degrees of Comparison more exquisite, than those which arise from the Gratification of sensual Appetites, which ever leave a Bitterness behind them. What worldly Pleasures can come in Competition with that Serenity of Mind which arises from a Consciousness of our having performed our Duty, and that whenever the Almighty shall please to call us hence, we have our Accounts ready? And on the other Hand, what temporary Misery can be greater than to have our Consciences lay before us, the terrifying List of all the Sins, Extravagancies, and Follies, of perhaps, a long and mispent Life; when languishing on a Death-Bed, dreading the Minute of our Dissolution, vainly wishing we could live over again our past Days, to make a right Use of the Time we knew not how to value. But in what consists the Difficulty, apprehended in a Life of Virtue? If it is rational, it is practicable, and if we will once enter upon the Practice of it, we shall find it easy, since Virtue becomes habitual, as well as Vice, which gains by slow Gradations on the Soul; for no one was thoroughly vicious, till he had pass'd several Degrees from less to greater Crimes. (*Nemo repente nequissimus.*) The Virgin Soul, if I may be allow'd the Expression, the innocent Man starts at the first Proposal

16 *An Exhortative to Repentance.*

posal of a vile or wicked Action, and though Vice is deck'd with all the Pomp of Riches, and the gay Robes of sensual Pleasures, yet they cannot so far hide her Deformity, but her first Sight carries with it Terror and Abhorrence, and commonly she meets a repulse in her first Attack. On the contrary, Men are allured by the Beauty of Virtue; become enamoured of her, and fly to embrace her, tho' unadorned with other than her native Charms, the Moment she appears to the Eyes of their Understanding: And, if she has not more Followers, 'tis owing to our own Cowardice, we have plung'd ourselves into sensual Pleasures, and have not the Courage to follow those Precepts which we approve, even while we act diametrically contrary to them; and then invent Reasons to cover our Pusillanimity; Reasons as false as are the Pleasures which we pursue: For the good Man's Countenance is always chearful; Peace of Mind delates his Heart, and diffuses o'er his Face an Air of Ease and Benignity: True Religion has nothing in it austere or morose; 'tis contrary to Reason, to say that what in a Manner anticipates the Joy of Heaven, by that we feel arise from virtuous Actions, can cause an Asperity of Temper. I don't doubt many here have felt an inexpressible Pleasure, when they have brought a timely Relief to some unhappy Wretch, whose Miseries have moved their Compassion; have risen from
their

their Prayers, with a Content, a Satisfaction, Composure and Alacrity, the Effects of which their whole Family has been sensible of, and which was too great for Description; but I defy any one to say, he has been guilty of Excess, or any one Action repugnant to his Duty as a Christian, without feeling a Remorse of Conscience, excepting such, as unhappily have their Consciences feared. Whence 'tis evident, that were there no other Life, in which we are to account for our Actions than this, a regular virtuous Life is preferable to all the false Pleasures, this World can afford us, and has been so esteem'd by the wisest Men of all Ages, as their Lives demonstrate: among whom I shall mention one only, *Marcus Antonius Philosophus* the Roman Emperor, who by his high Station of Life had it in his Power to gratify his Passions, which his love of Virtue kept in continual Subjection: But we are assured that glorious Rewards in a happy Eternity, will crown the Performance of our Duty; which surely ought to animate us to enter upon it, despise the Bug-bears which our sensuality dresses up, and be convinced from the Practice of those Hypocrites who lead a mortified Life for the Sake of Lucre, to draw in the Unwary, by an out-side Shew of Sanctity, and I may say are living Martyrs to the Devil, as they suffer greater Hardships than Virtue or Religion imposes, without the Satisfaction

C

they

18 *An Exhortative to Repentance.*

they afford ; I say, we may be convinced even from them, that the Difficulties are not insuperable ; and I will venture to aver, that on the contrary, they will with little Practice of what Reason will direct, prove to be merely imaginary, and arising only from a mistaken Self-Love. Let me then continue to exhort you, my beloved Brethren, seriously to consider the Precariousness of this Life, and from that Consideration enter upon such a Course, as may afford you Peace of Mind while on Earth, and a Crown of Glory in the blessed Regions of eternal Light : To which happy Place that we may all arrive, may God of his infinite Mercy grant, through the Merits of his ever blessed Son, that with pure Hearts, fervent Zeal, and a well grounded Confidence, we may join the Doxology of St. *Paul*, Now unto the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only wise God, be Honour and Glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

F I N I S.

